

CutBank

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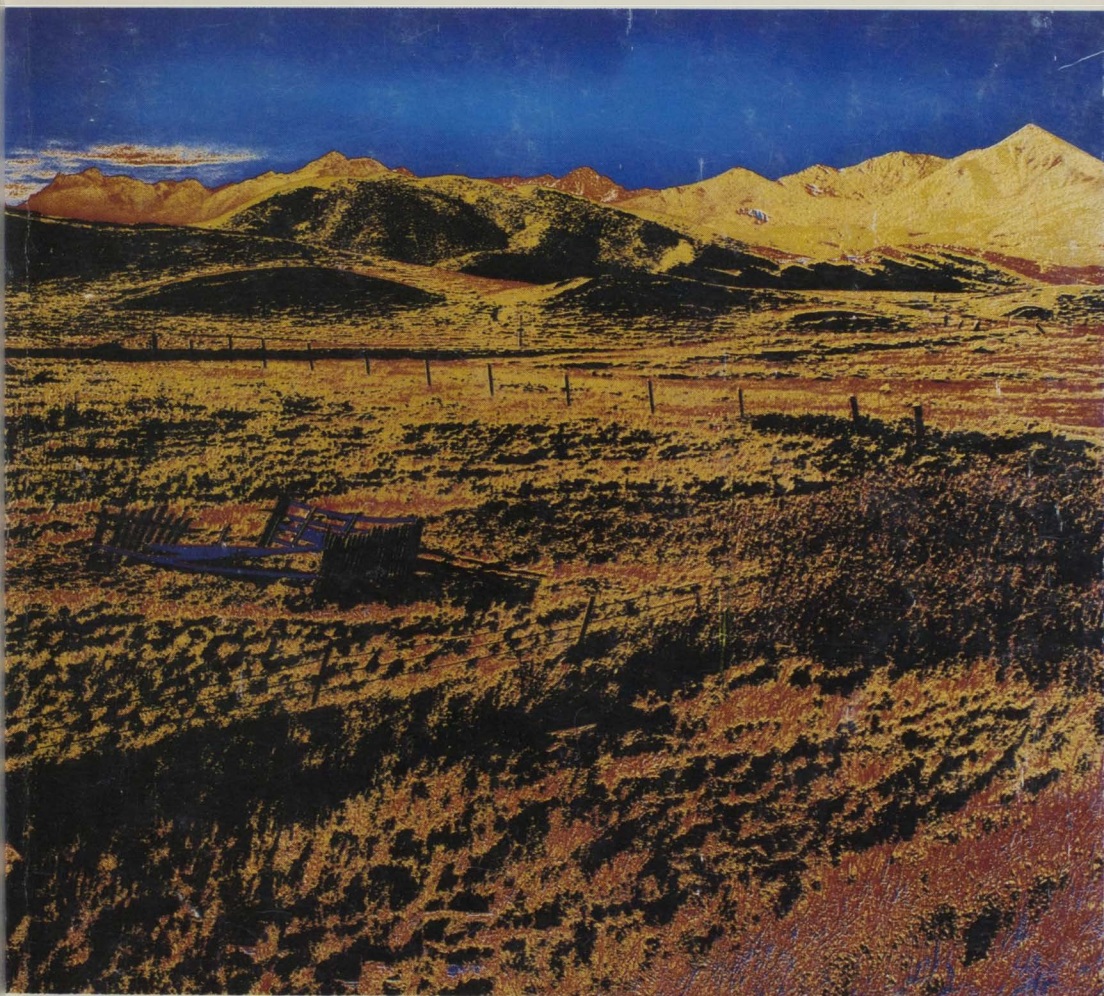
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CutBank



a special double issue

31/32

CUTBANK 31/32

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**A. B. Guthrie, Jr. Short Fiction Award
Richard Hugo Memorial Poetry Award**

*The editors and staff of CutBank 31/32
are pleased to announce
the winner of the 1988-89*

Richard Hugo Memorial Poetry Award

*Dara Wier - Eidetic
Sheryl Noethe - Bedwetter's Lizard Dream
and
the winner of the 1988-89*

A. B. Guthrie, Jr. Short Fiction Award

*Jerry Bumpus - Dawn of the Flying Pigs
Patricia Henley - Aces*

Judge: Cyra McFadden

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Aces

"Kit, baby," my mother says, "he's my lover, not my husband."

Red light, I think. Our voices grate against the Montana to Mexico connection. It's like we're talking in a tin can, vacuum-packed. My mother says lover the way she says *brie*, and husband comes out like *saltine*. She's explaining why she can't ask Dan to front Ruck and me the money to retain a lawyer. I can picture her there in San Miguel, among her geraniums, smoking the Virginia Slims her minister brings her in caseloads from Laredo. She can sit on her patio all day and never see the yoked women hauling well water in molasses cans. I've been to Dan's house, which squats high on a mountainside behind a whitewashed wall. She and Dan treated Kevin and me to a trip there when Kevin was just a baby, five years ago. Dan's generosity was more evident when they were first together. Before Ruck. BR, I've heard my mother say to my brother when she thought I wasn't listening. When she's in a certain mood, time in my life is measured *before Ruck* and *after Ruck*.

"Mother," I start. Then I don't know what to say. I want the money and I'm afraid I'll say the wrong thing and screw up my chances. The pay phone receiver's sticky and dirty. My breath is ashen like the sky. It's twenty-below in Bozeman, enemy cold, two days before Thanksgiving. I'm at the phone booth outside the Molly Brown and smashed paper beer cups litter the gravel parking lot. Chilled rivulets of sweat run under my navy pea jacket. My sneakers have holes in the toes and my pink socks tuft frozen through the holes. My feet ache from the cold.

"This is costing, Katherine."

"Are you getting the drift? We were *busted*."

"How did you get out of jail?"

"This woman. Ruck used to work for her."

"Where's Kevin? Poor thing."

"Kevin's with us." I do not want to tell her the way the local deputy said, "Come on, son," to Kevin and led him away in his pajamas and moon boots in the middle of the night. I do not like to remember the embarrassed half-wave Kevin gave me, ducking his head, as though he'd known all along this might happen. Do you know what you think about when you are suddenly separated from your child by forces beyond your control? I didn't think about the sweet afterbath smell of him or the wilted ox-eye daisies I find lined in a row in his room or the proud way he recites nursery rhymes. No. I sat on the bed in my cell, the walls of which were painted a hysterical orange, and thought of every rotten remark I'd ever made in exhaustion or impatience. I tormented myself and hoped to God Kevin was not remembering what I was remembering. He's out of the foster home now and he sticks like glue to Ruck.

"Did he do it?"

She means, is he guilty? "No, Mother. You know Ruck. He had the utility room of the trailer all set up with his lab, his inventions. Someone—a Jehovah's Witness or the woman who brings the milk—someone just saw all that stuff and misunderstood."

"Metham—what's it called?"

"Methamphetamine. Like diet pills."

"They used to call it speed."

I do not ask her how she knows this, but I remember the *Halcion* sleeping pills, little blue dream wheels, I once stole from her medicine cabinet. I do not tell her that it doesn't matter to me whether he's guilty or not. Just as it will not matter to the lawyer as long as he has his money and Ruck finds a path of even terrain through the truth and never deviates from it.

"They treated us like dangerous people," I say. This seems to strike just the right note, since she knows we are not dangerous people and deserve better treatment. She's bending my way, like a tree under weight of winter snow.

"Are you in Jardine right now?" I hear her blowing smoke away from the phone, a weary sound.

"No, we're in Bozeman. The feds won't let us go back to the trailer yet. They say they're still sifting the evidence."

"Where're you living?"

"In a friend's garage."

"A garage?"

"It's not so bad. Really. It's insulated. There's a wood stove."

"You're not—"

"Not what?"

"You're not sleeping on the floor, are you?"

"Ruck built a loft. Sort of a platform."

She sighs. "What about legal aid? They have that there, don't they?"

"We tried that," I say. "It was no go." Too corrupt for legal aid, I think.

"Give me your number."

"I'm at a pay phone. Ellen can't afford a phone yet."

"Call me again on Thanksgiving," she says. "I'll see what I can do."

"Thank you, Mother," I say. My mooching voice fills me with self-loathing. It's chronic, whenever I speak with her. Thirty-four seems too old to be calling collect, to be asking for money.

"Kit, dear," she says, just before we hang up, "Take care."

And for a split-second her voice brings tears to my eyes, but that is my response to my own life, not my response to her.

Jardine, Montana, is not a place I ever thought I'd end up.

I went to university at UC Santa Cruz for two years, had a surfer boyfriend, took weekend trips with my girlfriends to the Napa Valley where we'd drink our way from winery to winery in a maroon '65 Impala. We still liked to listen to Motown. This was in 1971, a time when I thought

I would—could—be somebody. I wanted to be in advertising or journalism.

But a woman does not find out who she'll be or what life will be like until she has a child. And for most women a child is like having all the windows in your house painted shut forever. Liberty is my oldest—thirteen. She lives in Pocatello with her Dad, who's been through several reincarnations—surfer, computer repairman, snow plow driver. Liberty was pure accident, as I believe so many babies are, even now. When I look back on those times, I do not think I made too many conscious decisions about sex. I was wild and only wanted experience. I did not think ahead.

Liberty is a teenager who knows what she needs to know—about IUD's, about diaphragms. She and her friends call them *phrams*. We talk about these things when she comes to visit in the summer. She can say blow job with the same ease I might have said ice cream cone when I was her age. So far it's all talk. I hope she stays a girl for a few more years, keeps her life for her very own as long as she can.

That was the time of the Big Split between mother and me—when I was pregnant with Liberty. There was no more school, no more surfer boyfriend. I found a job in a bookstore, sold my car to save for the hospital bills, bicycled all over town, and had some notion about baby and me against the world. There were abortions then, but I couldn't bring myself to make the decision, to take control.

Times were tough. Not much money, the colic, food stamps, an apartment where I had to beg the landlord for more heat. The first year of Liberty's life I probably saw the ocean twice. I realized the ocean was not that important to me anymore.

We moved around some after that, to Mendocino, to Klamath Falls, to the Okanagon Valley in central Washington, always looking for a place to be where we could relax, hide out, live cheap. Then Kevin came along when Liberty was seven, conceived in a burst of craziness one weekend when I couldn't stand my four walls anymore. I can't remember his father's name. I had my tubes tied on the delivery table.

Ruck and I met right after that and Ruck babied Kevin like he was his own. I think I loved him for that. There are so many men who won't touch you with a ten foot pole if you have children. The kids were my handicap. Ruck's was an artificial leg—he'd lost his own in a car accident.

We moved to Jardine because Ruck had a friend who'd abandoned this paid-for trailer up there and it sounded good—free rent at the end of the road, with a garden plot, and the mountains like a bulwark against the outside world. We'd given up on getting anywhere, having credit cards, owning anything besides our pickup and chain saw. We wanted to survive with as few hassles as possible. Sometimes I try to remember when it was that I ran out of aces. I think it happened a long time ago, in Santa Cruz, and I just realized it when we were busted.

The next morning Kevin's squirmed down to the bottom of the

queen-size futon we're all sleeping on. He's tickling my feet. I'm not very ticklish, but I pretend to be. When I squeal, he giggles. Ruck's breath is warm against my cheek. Sunlight glazes the aluminum strips of insulation between the studs.

"Wuck," Kevin says, suddenly sitting up and shivering, "I want to watch cartoons." His white-blond hair is cut in a burr all over except for a six-inch rat tail which curls on the nape of his smooth neck.

"Rrrr," Ruck says, his palm on my hip.

"Oh, yeah," Kevin says. "Rrrr . . . Wuck."

Ruck kisses my shoulder and switches on the radio. "Cartoons coming right up." He hops out of bed, his sweatpants loose and floppy below his stump. He slips Kevin's jacket over his PJ's. "You stay here," Ruck says to me. "I'll set him up inside with Darcy and the VCR. Be back pronto." Darcy is Ellen's little girl. We're staying in Ellen's garage.

Ruck puts on his single Sorel, pushes Kevin's moon boots on over his bare feet and lifts him down to the concrete floor. Then they're out the door, Ruck with one crutch, their voices trailing away while I'm still snuggled under the flannel sheets and blankets, listening to the Top 40 station. I push away the thought of the garage and concentrate on the embroidery on the top quilt, a flowery line of worn feather stitches, somehow more valuable to me, prettier, because they're old.

Within minutes, Ellen's at the door. She sticks her head inside and says, "Rise and shine, girl. Blueberry muffins are in the oven." Ellen's a morning person. She just got off welfare with a graveyard shift at a Mini-Mart. When we're waking up, she's unwinding from her job, but she's still a morning person.

"Ruck was coming back," I say.

"No longer. I seduced him with those muffins." She cackles.

I throw a pillow at her, which she catches with both hands and pitches back to me. The door's standing wide open and the cold's flowing in like poison gas.

"Close the door, birdbrain," I say. "I'm coming. I'm coming."

"Sorry," she says, "Does that mean you're multi-orgasmic?" She claps shut the door. Ellen can make a sexual joke of anything you say, so there's no point watching what you say. She hung around the bars when she was a girl. Her Dad owned Rosa's Cantina and her sense of humor was molded by frat boys.

Inside, it's festive. Ellen's current boyfriend, Glen, is lighting a small marble pipe of hash and its sharp, musty smell hits me first. The kitchen's warm and cozy. A long strand of red chilies hangs over the stove, souvenir of Ellen's summer trip to visit her folks in Socorro. Darcy and Kevin are lounging in front of the television in the living room, separated from the kitchen by only a knee-high bookcase. Ellen's smoking a black cigarette and lip-synching "Cary," which is playing on the radio. She's glossed her lips with shiny magenta. Six people in the house and we're crowded. For a brief inner moment, I'm in California when I hear that song, and my

life is still ahead of me, spanning open like a fan you might buy at Pier One, something foreign and exotic.

Then Kevin says, "Mom, Darcy says Big Bird's a jerk."

We all laugh. That annoys Kevin, but he turns back to the television.

On my way to the bathroom, I squeeze behind Ruck's chair and he reaches out and pats my calf. He and Glen are talking about hash. They remind me of my mother and Dan talking about their wines. After a while in these conversations you realize you've heard it all before. When I come out of the bathroom, the muffins are on the table.

"Real butter, babycakes," Ellen says to me.

Coffee steams in the mugs. Ellen's opened the back door a few inches to get rid of the hash smoke.

Just as I'm breaking open a muffin, there's a knock at the front door. The grown-ups raise their eyes to one another and Kevin runs over to Ruck. Glen opens the back door wide and the frigid breeze sweeps over us. Ellen flaps her hand, signaling him to close it. She goes to the window behind the television and looks out on the front steps.

"Sally Ann," she says to us.

She opens the door and it's a Salvation Army officer carrying a wicker basket of food. His uniform is royal blue, the elbows and knees shiny from being pressed.

"I'm looking for Katherine Ruckerson," he says, rocking back and forth, toe to heel. His face is a pale slab of authority.

"That's me," I say, spilling my coffee.

"What does he want?" Kevin says to Ruck. Glen has disappeared into the bathroom.

The Sally Ann officer steps inside and Ellen closes the door and folds her arms across her chest and waits beside the door, kind of smirky. His entry into the house changes everything. When someone like that—a social worker or police officer, whoever—comes into your home, you all at once see your house, your kids, the way they might. Kevin's bare feet on the cool linoleum, Darcy's hair ratty, the ashtray full of butts, the cracked window repaired with cardboard and duct tape. Certainly whatever vitality the morning might have had gets let like blood.

I go over to the coffee table. "I'm Kit Ruckerson."

"I'm Captain Cripe," he says. "This is your food basket from the Salvation Army."

"Thanks," I say, taking the basket and setting it on the coffee table.

"Is he a policeman?" Kevin says to Ruck.

The Nylons come on the radio.

"This is a food basket for four. My information stated that you have two children. Is that correct?" His watery blue eyes meet mine.

"I have another child, but she lives in Pocatello."

"Oh, dear," he says. I can see him eyeing the food in the basket, trying to decide what to do. Should he take back the canned spinach or the day old coffee cake?

I look at Ellen and she rolls her eyes. I am grateful for her. Behind me I can hear Ruck hopping to the sink. He turns on the tap.

"Well," Captain Cripe says, "Have a Happy Thanksgiving." This reminds me of the way my brother in New York always signs his letters "Happy Trails," as though he thinks I'm Dale Evans in Montana.

Ellen opens the door and he waddles out. We crack up when she shuts the door.

"At least," Ruck says, plopping back into his chair, "it's not like the old days when you went to them for a meal and they'd make you drag the 'Old Rugged Cross' around before you could eat."

"At least," Glen says, flinging his long gray ponytail over one shoulder. He picks up a wooden match and uses it to scrape the inside of the pipe bowl.

"Paramilitary, aren't they?" Ellen says, patting Ruck's shoulder as she returns to the table.

"It's a turkey, Mom," Kevin says, pawing through the basket.

"A big bird," Darcy shoots at him.

Our muffins are cold, the sun's blocked by a gauzy cloud, and Ruck hasn't shaved in days. He has more gray now than he did a month ago, and there's a frown line between his eyebrows, a groove he must be cultivating. The things that make us happy are like Crackerjack toys: Ellen's new job, the gram of hash, songs on the radio. I pour my cold coffee back into the pot and turn the gas up and stare out the window. I try to imagine what I'll be doing this time next year if Ruck's in prison. Nothing comes immediately to mind. The holidays all seem like rituals made for other people, people who have some refuge in the world, some margin of safety, who've never seen the inside of a welfare office or the lust in the eyes of an arresting officer.

Ellen laughs. "He sure took the fucking wind right out of our sails."

Speed's not a substance to mess around with. Rumor has it that it makes men impotent and women bitchy. I don't think many people do it anymore. I have tried it once and I know what homemade speed looks like: gooeey and gray, kind of like Sterno fuel, but not nearly as dangerous. I never knew what Ruck was doing in the utility room. He was home, he was affectionate, he spoke to Kevin with respect. That was enough for me. But speed, sweet Jesus, speed.

The time I ate that speed was with Casey, an old boyfriend of mine, who came to see me one June when I was thinning apples in Brewster, Washington, near the Columbia River. I remember we used to catch carp in that river and cook them up with plenty of curry to cover the trash taste. And I remember Liberty had gone to see her Dad and Kevin wasn't born yet. I can remember all this as though it were yesterday—even the songs on the jukebox at the Bohemian Tavern. I guess you can consider yourself fortunate if some of the events in your life take on the sheen of a movie, that romance sheen, when trees are in bloom, light's gold on the water,

and you look in the mirror and know you look the best you ever will. That summer was like that for me.

I had worked for nine days straight, thinning the little green reds and golds from the trees of a man named Cooper who provided a trailer and some cabins for his workers. He had a Bible on the front seat of his pickup truck and every year I'd ever been there he offered the women extra money—fifty cents more a tree—if they would work topless. I never did, but it's possible I never did just because the price wasn't high enough. After nine days, I woke up thinking, "Today's my day off." I dressed up in an old forties church dress, blue rayon with padded shoulders, painted my toenails a color called Sea-Lily, which shimmered like the inside of a seashell, and thought about hitching into town to the Bo for lunch.

I heard a horn toot and when I looked out the window, there was Casey in a little green sports car with rusty fenders. He doffed his cap and said, "Hi, Sugarpie," just as though it hadn't been three years since we'd last met. Casey is the kind of man you can have a good time with for a night or two, if you're in the mood to strain your capacity for excess.

We bought a fifth of Cuervo Gold and headed over to Chelan where he had a connection to buy the speed. We rolled over the river highway, feeling like we owned it, listening to the Dead's "Mars Hotel" and catching up, gossiping about every old hippie we knew between Spokane and Bellingham. Casey was a shameless gossip.

In Chelan I waited in the car outside a ma-and-pa grocery while Casey went in and made his deal. I could see the long lake and the carloads of tourists lined up to take the ferry ride into the glacial heart of the Cascades. I remember I imagined what it might be like to live there in Chelan, on the edge of the wilderness. I liked the thought. This was not unusual for me in those days to think of moving. Moving's something you can do a lot of when you're young. You can kiss your friends goodbye and not look back. When you're older moving takes its toll—it's a kind of death to give up all you've known and start all over somewhere else. But then I could daydream, I could picture it. I wanted to go to brunch in the old white clapboard hotel there, on a Sunday morning. I thought that would be the ultimate in elegance.

After Casey came out we went over to his friend's place, near the lake, and we stayed there late into the night, eating speed with a knifeblade from a sheet of aluminum foil, drinking the tequila, and when that ran out, we walked out for beer. We talked and talked. It seemed we could remember every tiny detail of every meal we'd ever eaten, every argument we'd ever had, every relationship we'd ever been in. We shared the most forgettable details of our childhoods, my Dan River dresses which had sashes in the back, his obsession with Sherlock Holmes. We told the true stories of the lovers we'd had before one another, including all the parts we'd left out before, out of discretion or fear. And all the while, there in that Chelan apartment, over a paint store, we listened to the country station on the radio, which was so unlike us, but the music seemed to fit that

night: Kitty Wells and Bob Wills and Patsy Cline. I remember Casey saying, "She's very sexy," when Patsy Cline sang "Crazy." And the next day, I really didn't care that things seemed a little raw around the edges. I was happy in a way, happy to have talked myself out, to someone I could trust, in Lake Chelan where nobody knew who I was and the very air seemed a precious cold blue from the firs, the deep lake.

The next day we do Thanksgiving: cook and bake and eat and watch the Christmas parade with Kevin and Darcy. Ruck and Glen go out several times and each time they return they seem a little more wasted. "It's a holiday, baby," Ruck says, when I give him an evil look. In between the sweet potatoes and the parade and the time Ruck and I make love in the bathroom, I keep going out to call my mother. My whole day revolves around making that connection. Each time, a butchy high-tech voice says that all circuits are busy. Around seven that night, snow begins falling in lacy ellipses and I decide not to go out anymore.

On Friday, it's a piece of cake. The call goes right through.

"Kit," she says, and right away I hear that she's swallowing tears. "We just can't."

We. There's static on the line behind a shadow conversation, a man saying, "I'll meet you in Butte. At Denny's. We'll take it from there." Even at this distance, I recognize the optimism in his voice and I wish I were talking to him, someone upbeat, someone with solutions.

"You can't."

"But Kit. I have an idea."

No ideas, I think. We need money.

"I could send you that brooch. Grandma's brooch. You could pawn it."

I'm standing at the phone booth behind the Safeway and I can smell the heavy grease from the deli. There's a man with a bedroll and an army surplus pack, opening the lid to the brown dumpster. The snow has stopped and the sky is a pale winter blue, like old jeans. I can picture Dan at his roll top desk writing checks and I wonder why he can't just write one for me, why he wants to make it difficult for her, why she has to cry and offer me the brooch. Which is probably worth about three hundred dollars anyway.

"Don't do it, Mother," I say.

"Why not?"

"It's not enough anyway."

"It could get you started. You could get it back from the pawn shop when your ship comes in." She giggles.

I want to say, we are marooned on a desert island, there is no freshwater, there are no fucking ships. But in her giggle there is more desperation than I am feeling.

"It would take too long," I say, improvising a response. "To mail it, hock it. We need the money this week."

"What will you do?" she whispers. She's afraid.

"I think we'll sell the truck," I say.

That makes her feel better and, in truth, it makes me feel better, too, knowing that selling the truck is an option, and that if we do, we'll consider ourselves really on the bottom, two people without a vehicle in winter, and that that will probably be the very worst time and improvements are bound to happen after that. I promise to call again in two weeks and we hang up.

I walk down to the courthouse to see the social worker I've been assigned. There's not much traffic and the snow is still pure and untrammelled on the sidewalk. I remember Jardine and wonder if we'll ever call it home again. On a day like this in Jardine, I might have strapped on my beat up cross-country skis and glided down to town, to Gardiner, where my friend Louisa and I would drink drafts at the Blue Goose and complain about our lives in a good-natured way. Almost always we would go out at dusk, across the potholed street to where the park begins, and we'd listen to the elk cows calling, singing, the way they do. Then she'd have driven me home, five miles into the mountains. I liked going downhill and not having to work my way back up.

At the courthouse, there is one receptionist for all the welfare workers. She is young, around twenty-two, I guess, with a polished made-up face, no smiles, and she keeps herself removed, at a distance, as though she might catch a disease from the people who pass through the door asking for help.

"Did you have a good holiday?" I say, just to put her on the spot, force a reply.

"Yes, thank you," she says, her eyes scanning the appointment book. "Have a seat in the waiting room."

The waiting room is a dull place, with old copies of *Family Circle* and *Redbook*, posters about nutrition, and a laundry basket of broken toys, firetrucks without wheels, dolls without eyes. I count the change in the bottom of my purse and consider buying a bag of Bugler and some rolling papers. Smoking's a crutch I pick up in times of crisis.

My worker comes to the door and invites me in to her cubby hole. She's a big woman, with hair the color of old brass doorknobs, and she wears paper maiche jewelry in the shape of animals—whales, herons, grizzly bears.

When she asks me if Ruck has found a job, I say, out of the blue, "I wonder why I ended up with a man who's handicapped?"

She looks up from her triplicate forms and says, "They're all handicapped, Kit. His just shows." And I see that she has been crying recently, and for a long time. Her eyes and cheeks are swollen. She's not wearing her fake fingernails and her thumb cuticles are ragged, as though she's bitten them.

I stare out the window and say, "No, not yet. We're both looking."

And I think about what might have happened to her Thanksgiving Day to make her that cynical, that hard. A woman can get hard from hurt

if it's repeated often enough, and the hardness can make her say the bitterest things. I haven't been hurt much. It's true I've been in some rough water, but I've never been with a man who called me names or made me cry all night. And even as I tell her about the garage and the food basket from Sally Ann, I am picturing Ruck and Kevin waiting at Ellen's for me, and I can be sure that Ruck is giving Kevin his pb sandwich for lunch and conning him into drinking a glass of milk. I think of selling the truck, finding the lawyer, going to trial, starting over afterwards, all the slogging months of winter ahead of us as we pick up the pieces. And I think, it's just another one of life's predicaments, worse than some, but not as bad as others. For a few minutes, it's like I'm up on Sacajawea Peak, looking down on all of us, instead of locked in my life like a child in a closet.

Patricia Henley

Bedwetter's Lizard Dream

For JBT

Your first night in prison & you're young &
 you wet the bed, the top bunk,
 over a giant from Detroit doing hard time.
 You lie clutching the edge of the bed
 while the mattress fills.
 You dream about an open window.
 You dream that you are running in place
 and drowning. You are, of course, naked.
 You dream of falling. Tie your pajamas
 into a knot and look for a hiding place.

The giant lizard has found you at last,
 alone. A child again. This lizard you can't
 resolve drags itself towards your bed.
 You squeeze your eyes shut and scream.
 If you dream of an open window,
 God is watching. He will send his horses,
 aflame, into your dream.
 You are naked at the bus depot trying
 to read your ticket.
 You're traveling light. A 3-legged dog
 with two heads stands snarling over your suitcase
 in a vacant lot. He must know you well to hate you so.
 On the edge of the dream your mother is crying.
 Maybe it's because you're in jail. She is shaking her
 head in disbelief. You are breaking her heart, and
 your own as you climb now, empty-handed, naked,
 an orphan now, onto a bus whose sign says, "Hell"
 or "Mexico". Your driver is a giant lizard who
 calls you by name. Calls you bedwetter. Eats you.
 Lays an egg. Shifts into third and floors it.

You are going now to hell or mexico.
 Your legs are wet.
 If you dream of an open window, jump.
 You awaken in prison. Alone. Grown.
 A lizard. An egg. A stranger on the bus.
 Your cell mate awakens, too, and he is
 swallowing water from the toilet
 with a cup he has formed
 in his big hands.

Sheryl Noethe

Home

Do not let them come as sheep.
Let the wolves come as wolves.
It is not so hard to die
but it kills you trying to stay alive here.
Every morning my grampa and his dog
get up at dawn and wait for me. If I don't
come down he pulls his old self up the stairs
and the old poodle drags up behind him
They stand outside my door. Then they open it.
The next time I come home he tells me how I kept
them wondering, the two of them, about if I
was home, or if I was lost
and one of these days I'd come home and they
wouldn't know me anymore. The dog would bite me.
And grampa would go on watching Gunsmoke on T.V.
as if I wasn't there
But it didn't go like that. He did actually die
first and a long time had gone between us.
In the end he wouldn't have known me, they said.
The end was hard and went on and on. I wouldn't
have changed anything. It wouldn't have been any
easier. He is the one who would not stay home.
I'm here, I'm the same as ever. The girl who lived in
that room lives in it on and on, and the old man waits
in front of a t.v. set with a dog. The furniture is dark
with secrets.
There is a false wall in the basement stairway
filled with empties, locked doors to rooms of children
disowned, abandoned, decades earlier,
a dead wife, exhausted by childbirth, taken with her seventh.
Children, scrambling out a back window and a man
roaring home from town. A man my mother called a demon.
Now an old man, whose old bad house I live in. And am afraid
of the basement. And dream of lizards. And he sits, nights,
watching Gunsmoke and patting his stinking dog.

Sheryl Noethe

The International Luncheon

People keep asking if I feel okay
 My skin is off
 color like I've
 got no sunshine
 or I'm hiding
 or both.

Helicopters descend like butterflies
 on the estate and the ladies step out
 in gauze and chiffon and diamonds from
 south africa and even in this heat
 the furs are on extinct lists.
 400 quail are waiting for liz taylor
 (The Times mentions her prince of wales diamonds in a hot
 gasp) and donald trump who could rent New York City to the
 t.v. stations for a dollar a year if the mayor would let him
 from his perch atop the welfare hotels and they're burning.
 He raises an open fist at trump and they hiss, "More for
 us." A ton of salmon is waiting in front of a line of
 servants dressed in formal attire in the heat.
 The politician's wives dance with the dress designers
 and the owner of an empire grasps mick jagger's wife and
 grins like an old bad dog.

I take the train to the south bronx
 schools where there aren't enough books to go around in the
 cracking classrooms with never less than 35 children whose
 education is to funnel them into a factory that burned down
 in the 60's when the fire from here made people look this
 way, say "Shame", then go back to the game, never looking
 beyond Yankee Stadium at the grey smoke rising like
 tornadoes from the emptied high rises and I say this is not
 an accident I say this requires helicopter luncheons where
 henry kissinger flies in from Berlin to sit next to some
 dried out old dame that owns about everything. This is a
 careful business of old and evil dogs.

Sheryl Noethe

*Because it's Raining on
Robert Johnson's Birthday*

Which is the way it should be.
No round-faced sun high over the city
shining like the bossman, bright and white,
when the line restarts
for the morning shift.

The rain turning into sleet, into steel,
guitar picks coming down and the sound
of freight trains sliding through the railyard,
strumming the fretwork
of ties and track.

Last night I dreamed
he was tramping down the shell roads
of Louisiana,
his clothes rumpled and torn.
Following him,
looking over his shoulder was his shadow
wearing a tuxedo, black as scorn.
I could hear bloodhounds hunting coon
on the ridge at dusk, digging out
the moon from its lair of night.

The door of my room chained, rattling
when the loaded coalcars pass
carrying the burden of darkness
into morning light.
The lamp left on, the shade
dusty as mothwings.
On the nighttable
an insidious still life—
a fedora, no shotglass or syringe, just my pen
and a few crumpled bills and change.

This morning it rains for Robert Johnson.
He shakes my shoulder
saying wake up whiteboy.
This day ain't goin' away.
Nobody askin' ya to believe in the blues
just because.

James Finnegan

The Woman Asleep in Our Bed

is not mine, which must mean
it was you who placed her there.
Surely this is not my imagination.
Please tell me so.
See how she wakes and smiles up
at us so warmly, trying to please,
as we stand at the foot
of our bed.
Isn't she pleasant, and why
won't she speak?
Notice there is room in the bed
for three of us, if I don't mind
sleeping close to the wall
and we each agree neither
to toss nor turn, but to guard
our positions carefully
until sleep has taken us all.
Have you warned her
how I call out in my dreams
and what I say is so funny,
though often distracting?
Isn't it time we all went to bed?
Notice how beautiful her hair
in this yellow light, or,
perhaps you planned it so
to entrance me. Of course you did.
You think of everything.
But how long is she staying,
and what is her name?
And does this mean she is mine,
as well as yours?
Please tell me so.

Marnie Prange

Imprimatur

One winter I lay down in front
of my lover in the snow and said the words
"precision" and "beauty." And though
it was dark and I could not see his face,
which I knew to be precise and beautiful,
I saw the nodding pines behind him nod
their affirmation. So I swept my arms slowly
up against the snow and slowly back
against my sides to rest, stood up then
and admired with my amazed lover the angel
pressed by my body in the snow.
Now when I lie down with my lover
the angels my body keeps lie down with us,
and when I take his hands in mine and spread
our arms wide like wings extended
we press an angel into our bed
readying for flight.

Marnie Prange

Nuclear Peach

for Meng Qingshi

You sit on the floor of my home,
shoes off, green tea cooling,
teach me the name of English walnuts:

her tow—
nuclear peach.

Beauty is a pregnant woman,
the big river
you swim every day (April to October)
though your body turns purple
those years in the countryside.

Together,
we translate a poem for your wife's letter:

My body is in the moon.
One lamp reflects my thinny face.
Thousands of things, including us, are quiet.
The bright moon casts her dim light on me.

Your favorite artist,
a carpenter who learned to paint,
flowers, worms, fish, a frog,
always painted crabs
during the Japanese invasion,
for the way they walked, (30 million Chinese killed)
not like us, you say.

Professor Mao, you call him,
waved a chicken bone with meat on it.
Some of our soldiers, he said,
victorious on the battlefield,
will fall to the sugar-coated bullets
of the bourgeoisie.

You think sour dough
 is the name of a nation—Florida,
 which you eat with relish.
 You recite for us, in Chinese,
 the old, old poem
 through which you teach your grandchild,
 how precious
 every grain of rice
 spilled from her bowl:

The sun is overhead.
 Everyone plows the field.
 Sweat falls to the ground.
 Who knows that the rice in every bowl,
 every grain of it,
 is precious?
 Someone's labor,
 harvested by hard work.

Your grandchild picks up
 every grain of rice
 spilled from her bowl.

I tell you of the Seri Indians
 living the edge in the desert,
 everyday saving their feces
 so the undigested seeds
 can be eaten again.
 But that's filthy,
 you say.

As we drive over the bridge
 there are flowers, red and yellow,
 tied to the railing
 where the Indian girl fell to the tracks:
 her blood in this sun.
 Bullets coated with sugar.

You teach me Chinese silence,
beauty is a big river,
her body in the moon.
The Seri woman
picks every seed
spilled from her bowel,
someone's precious labor.
Thousands of things,
 flowers, fish, worms, a frog,

 including us,

 are quiet.

Roger Dunsmore

Bread for the Moon

"I can't see," I kept complaining. I bounced up and down next to him in the cab of the truck. "I can't see," craning my neck at the mountains.

"Can't see what?" John Paul shifted in his seat, guiding us farther into British Columbia. John Paul, a miracle of blonde geometry, squinted over at me. He saw what was there—spindly trees tethèring the slopes, November Ponderosa pines, and firs a tired green, the rest of them some kind of torched spruce. Candy on fire.

"I don't know," I said, taking a pull on my homebrew. "I guess I can't see what *else* is there. Or what's on the other side."

"I believe there's more mountains on the other side, lady." He kissed me. "Unless I miss my guess."

Last November I was in love with John Paul.

This November, I'm still in Wallace, Idaho. John Paul is elsewhere. I'm lactating, and very tired.

In Idaho, it's difficult to see. Impossible. There is no place in this state where I could stand on a flat spot, my eyes pinned to the edge of the land where it cleaves a blue bowl of air. I can't track snowstorms or funnel clouds knocking down fenceposts, phone wires, the mile markers on country roads. Wallace snakes between mountains. They shed more light than the sun or one of the several slivers of moon. The sun can only be seen into this valley at flat out noon, when, even then, it's like oyster liquor through a sieve. Too, I almost always have rain for lunch, anyway. It rains here.

The geologists come out when it rains. I don't know what they do, but they pock the clam colored rock and crowd the few lunch counters, and they father innumerable children, who will all, it seems, come to sit in my classroom in St. Rose of Lima grammar school.

"Who was here before anybody?" I ask my class. I spent much of last night making transparencies and ditto masters detailing the many features of the Coeur d'Alene Indians. Since the 50s there has been a shift in the teaching of elementary school history. We are no longer to impress upon the children their share of White Man's Burden, but are supposed to emphasize the melting pot. I'm supposed to make them forget the Coeur d'Alene lolling sullenly on the streetcorners here, and in Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint, drinking their government checks, slinking home with sleepy drunk Irish mothers, to trailers and lake shacks and motels.

Before anybody? My twenty-five taffy-boned, milktoothed second graders scuffle and murmur in their pastel desks. The chairs are bolted to the tables. A tiny, pinched piece of a girl, legs swinging under her uniform, raises her hand.

"God?" she asks.

The girl who answered by question is right. Of course. I'm still a new teacher, a second year teacher, and sometimes I don't know how to ask the questions I need to ask to get the answers I'm supposed to get.

"Very good," I say to the class. "Of course, Our Father has always been here. I didn't ask the question correctly; I'm sorry."

Three of the more devout make the sign of the cross and wait for instructions.

When I was in grammar school in Des Moines, in between elaborate games of guessing the letter of the day and annual visits from the dental hygienist and her flannel board pieces illustrating the four basic food groups, I watched, we all watched, the Apollos slam into the ocean. We all got out of classes to watch them on T.V., "the future happening now." The sky was falling. History.

The girl who answered my question is named Rehoboth, which is, I've found out, Hebrew for "room enough." She is the youngest of seven rabbit children born to a couple who drive the whole brood to Coeur d'Alene every Sunday and Wednesday night for charismatic Mass and prayer meeting. Rehoboth heals the sick. Rehoboth speaks in tongues. Rehoboth's brother Peter, a skewer of bamboo in Miss Delaney's fifth grade homeroom, interprets her chanting, gasping streams on the playground after lunch, while a ragged circle of children look puzzled and finger their medals. The parish is embarrassed, the diocese concerned.

Rehoboth worships Mary.

Sister Mary Joseph is beside herself. In Religion class Rehoboth sits, smiling, hands remarkable in repose, a piece of papyrus or silk, a smirking Byzantine Madonna, spacey and holy.

"We adore Mary, the Mother of God. We pray she will intercede for us. We do not worship Mary. Do you understand?" Sister slaps a ruler into her palm.

Rehoboth gazes at the broken slate of the blackboard. "Yes." The cardboard alphabet cards with all the Palmer Method letters paired upper and lower case, the discrete little arrows indicating the correct stroke.

"Now. Do you worship Mary?"

"Yes." Rehoboth smiles as if in pain, or ecstasy.

I am interested in prostitutes. I want to tell the children about the whores in Wallace. A town full of men, all shifting, squinting, starting, smoking, smiling, has brought them to spread like hot jam on one whole story above the bar just a block from St. Rose. And the hunters. After a summer of drought—and rain, and fire—the seasons open and the men come over from Spokane and up from Moscow to paint the town with elks' blood, drying into smokestains in truckbeds, dripping from snapped, streaked deer, pheasant, rabbit, dripping into the gravel lots behind the prostitutes. "This happens here," I want to say, "This is history."

John Paul had worked spotting fires over the summer. He had worked on oil rigs, in the silver mine, in the Potlatch and Kootani sawmills. There

were pictures of him posing with the heads and immense racks of dead elk. The animals looked wizened and tired.

"But what are they like?" In John Paul's bedroom, and in his bed, we were only light and heat. Flour sack curtains drawn against a high window full of branches. The knotholes in the wall were papered over with grey electrical tape. The bedsprings wheezed. Although I never saw him naked (not once; it was always night), I felt him under me, winged hips awkward and apologetic as a boy's, his smooth chest, fisted nipples, the veins in his arms and neck surfacing. It was never right—his cock too long or my hips too shallow. One of us always hurt, our faces wet. I asked John Paul about the prostitutes.

"They're like," I rocked forward, kissing him. He murmured, "Oh—they're like whores, I guess. Nice enough gals." He traced my wince.

"But you had a favorite girl," I whispered, kneading his shoulders. "You knew her."

John Paul laughed low. "I knew her and knew her, lady," John Paul breathed in hard, damp, "but that's about it."

"Didn't you ever—ouch—careful, sweet love—didn't you ever talk to her?" I stroked his scrotum, his penis finding someplace softer. I wanted him to have talked to her, to have taken her out for a hamburger or to a rodeo. I wanted her to pull away with some kind of dignity and say he shouldn't feel obliged to treat her nice, or to treat her at all. Then he sits her down hard on a barstool. "Tell me about yourself."

I was a cheerleader. I am an only child. I was the second soprano in a gospel trio. I like to dance. I like pizza. I was named after Patsy Cline. I'm in love with you.

"I talk to you gal," he whispered.

I met John Paul because a kind man was concerned that I wasn't meeting any nice boys. My landlord worked in the sawmill with John Paul. "He's an okay fellow," he said, "and he went to school, too, down at the university, so you two can talk books, or whatever." He winked at me.

After John Paul left, after the month of tea colored stains on my underwear, and sitting down suddenly in the middle of giving spelling tests ("Attic," I'd say, the world buckling, "Apple"). I ventured out one night to the Oasis Tap, walking down the narrow streets of Wallace, keeping time with the St. Ignatius, imagining the sunset beyond the scrubbed mountains. The district was kind. The geologists pragmatic. I was a young girl who'd made a mistake. They forgave me for things I've never done.

The Tap sees few women. Few good ones. The whores are upstairs. They have their rooms, their Chinese lamps, their radios. I caused a stir at the bar. Two women I'd seen before came out from under the Rainier and Heidelberg signs and came to my booth with a yellow cheese sandwich and ginger ale. One had a tattoo and the other had a baby. They'd gotten them the same winter, before they knew each other. They'd seen me around too. Girl or boy? High or low? Daddy or not?

I'm from Des Moines, Iowa, a strange place. A surprising place, like the old billboards said. My father would roll down the window when we drove to our Wisconsin vacations. As we passed the flat, shimmering fields, or the hog shit in the confinement pens, he'd say "Smell that?"

"Yeah." It was a gas station restroom smell, as reassuring to me as the smell of my shit.

"Know what it is?"

"What?" I shifted and reached over the seat to touch my mother's shoulder rounded against her bedpillow and that morning's smudged and crumpled *Register* tossed out.

"'at's the smell of money, kid," Dad would say. The sun is hot there, the ground roiling with fossils and earthworms, the leavings of glaciers and herbicide, shit and money.

Hey sweetheart—

By the time you read this your old loverboy pain in the ass is off to parts unknown. Yeah, I don't know, gal—the sawmills going bust and I'm feeling that wanderlust. I figure I'll go on up to Prince Rupert, or Alaska. I still know some guys and I could get on up there on a rig. Hope you don't spend too much time thinking about old long lost John Paul. You know we didn't have an awful lot in common, lady—you were far too good for me and put up with my backward Western ways in fine Iowa style. But no amount of good loving can make two people as different as we are stick together. I do thank you for all that. Remember me whenever you drink a beer! And sorry for the lack of a proper farewell, lady—I don't go for all the sturm und drang—just a coward, I guess! Ha!

Thanks again—

J.P.

He owned a topographical map of Mexico, two rifles and a stack of Jack London paperbacks. His pubic hair was clover honey. I crushed the dead flowers his old lover had sent him into his soft fur. His old lover was an angel, off to the Sorbonne and then married. His mother, too, was an angel. A dead one.

How did I get here? Maybe it was the ancient pull of going west, young man. I thought of forests, Yellowstone and cowboys enough to cotton eye Joe with in a barroom, giggling drunk, wearing a skirt. I left a land of shit and money to come to the dying West. I subscribed to the *Seattle Times* and caught a ride in a van with a girl who lived on my dorm floor, bound for a hot summer with her Western boyfriend on lonesome Highway 2.

I went to the state university back home. The motto was "Science with Practice." So I was taught to teach as though it—teaching—is something that can be taught. A science. They videotaped me teaching mock lessons to rows of empty chairs, then the tapes were critiqued by my classmates, who suggested that I make better use of the educational media available

to me—films and filmstrips, dittoes, transparencies, worksheets. Chalk.

I spent a lot of evenings in the library reading articles in *Instructor* and *First Teacher* on how to motivate children to read. Gold star charts still work. Anything you can put in neat columns or boxes clearly labeled with a child's name. My students at St. Rose are hard to design these things for, though, because they're in second grade. This is the age for changing your name, probably because until you're this age, six or seven or eight, I don't think you know you can do it—can do whatever you damn well want to with your name. Toss it out and start over clean. Most of the time it's not serious. Matthew prefers "Matt," or the other way around. Jennifer wants "Jenny" or even "Niffy." My last gold star chart had all the names correct because I took each of the children aside during recess and asked "What do you want to be called on my next reading chart?"

"Daisy," said Rehoboth breathlessly, breaking away from her brother.

I put up the chart on a Monday in October. Across the top was a green and yellow bookworm, bespectacled and smiling a huge half circle, wearing an aviator cap and a long, fluttering red scarf. The worm was sitting in what was supposed to be a space capsule, but after an evening of shredding brown cardboard, it was only a tube trailing globs of cotton ball exhaust. Arching above the work, in blue paper covered with glitter, were the words "Reading is Out of This World!"

The children crowded around before the bell rang, locating their names. After the Pledge, roll call and morning prayers I introduced the chart to the students. "There's something new in our classroom. Who can tell me—hands, please!—who can tell me what it is?"

The children had questions. How many stars? For how long? What if a kid reads a whole bunch of Clifford the Big Red Dog books—do they all count as one star?

My favorite student, Luke, a big seven year old with a "Masters of the Universe" lunchbox, raised his hand. "What's that thing the worm is in?"

I smiled and nodded, taking one step toward the children. "That is a very good question, Luke. It's supposed to be a spaceship, but I don't think I did a very good job."

The children agreed. "Looks like a loaf of bread," said Jenny. Niffy. "Wormy old bread!" crowed one of the twins.

"Wouldn't send bread to the moon, ain' no people there."

Reheboth was red from the effort it took to use her mother tongue, rocking a little in her desk.

"Don't need no bread, don't need no nothing, just spacemen up there gonna toss it all back down." She quivered.

All eyes turned to me.

I call Des Moines every Sunday night and reverse the charges. I call with Baby fastened to my breast, near the furnace, surrounded by my students' work, kneeling in a sea of cheap, soft paper. When I was a girl there was so much of it. In Wallace now, even at St. Rose, the teachers

are given a stern paper conservation speech to deliver on the first day of class, having to do with spitwads, airplanes, cootie catchers, and passing secret notes. I tried to relate it to the children's lives by talking about trees and sawmills closing. I scared them.

And Rehoboth, I see, still transposes her ps, bs and ds. Silent e escapes her. I have to decide whether to hold her back.

Static nuzzles my mother's voice. "Oh darling, you just sound so quiet."

I stare around the room at my calendars. Everyone gives away calendars here: the credit union, the bank, the gas station, the beauty parlor, pool hall and church. I didn't know what to do with all of them; it was slapstick, me staggering down the main drag, baby in one arm, a stack of calendars in the other. I've never thrown away a calendar. They're all thumbtacked neatly in a line on my cool wall, low, as if for a child.

"It's just the connection, Mom." I squint at the calendars. It is Armistice Day. "Remember your soldier dead." "Stop and smell the roses."

"You sound so far away!" Mother sounds like she's yelling down a laundry chute.

"I am far away," I whisper. I imagine downtown Des Moines tonight, conventioners' headlights fanning rainbow puddles of street grease. Teenagers and transients dodging each other on the Loop, past the Plasma Bank, the pawn shops and wig shops and delis, all lit up in red neon from the Traveler's Insurance umbrella and the KRNT Weather Beacon, newly lit for the first time since the energy shortage.

"Please come home when the term ends," my mother is saying.

"Send pictures of that baby," orders Dad on the cordless.

The history lesson for tomorrow is about the Jesuits and the Cataldo Mission. I'll look out the windows at the rain. There are still mineshafts enough to throw yourself down, if you're alone and free in the West. My students will work on their lesson, drawn across their desks like delicate bows. The school's furnace and their pencils scratch.

I think I have my history confused. I kneel and squint at my row of calendars. What day is it? I forget what has happened and what I wish had happened, what could happen and what will happen. I wait at night. I can make myself think John Paul is coming in from working graveyard, opening his shirt, the tawny sawdust falling from his chest, raining on my neck. Only the whores are constant. And the nuns. And Baby.

And I do love the prostitutes for the gifts they've given me, dreams of the sturdy stock that compels a girl to run—from the strap, or a strict Mormon mother with a ramrod spine, or lucky babies cracked open on the tiles of gas station bathrooms. Gone for good. I didn't run from anything. The hunters must leave their mark all over them. In the little store pinned to the road outside town, the licorice haired wife won't let the hunters touch the beer, preventing accidental feather prints on cool cans tacky with wild animal blood.

"History is happening. Look!" I want to say to Niffy and Megan and

Luke. I want to say to Daisy and Peter, "There are cool women covered with feathers and blood."

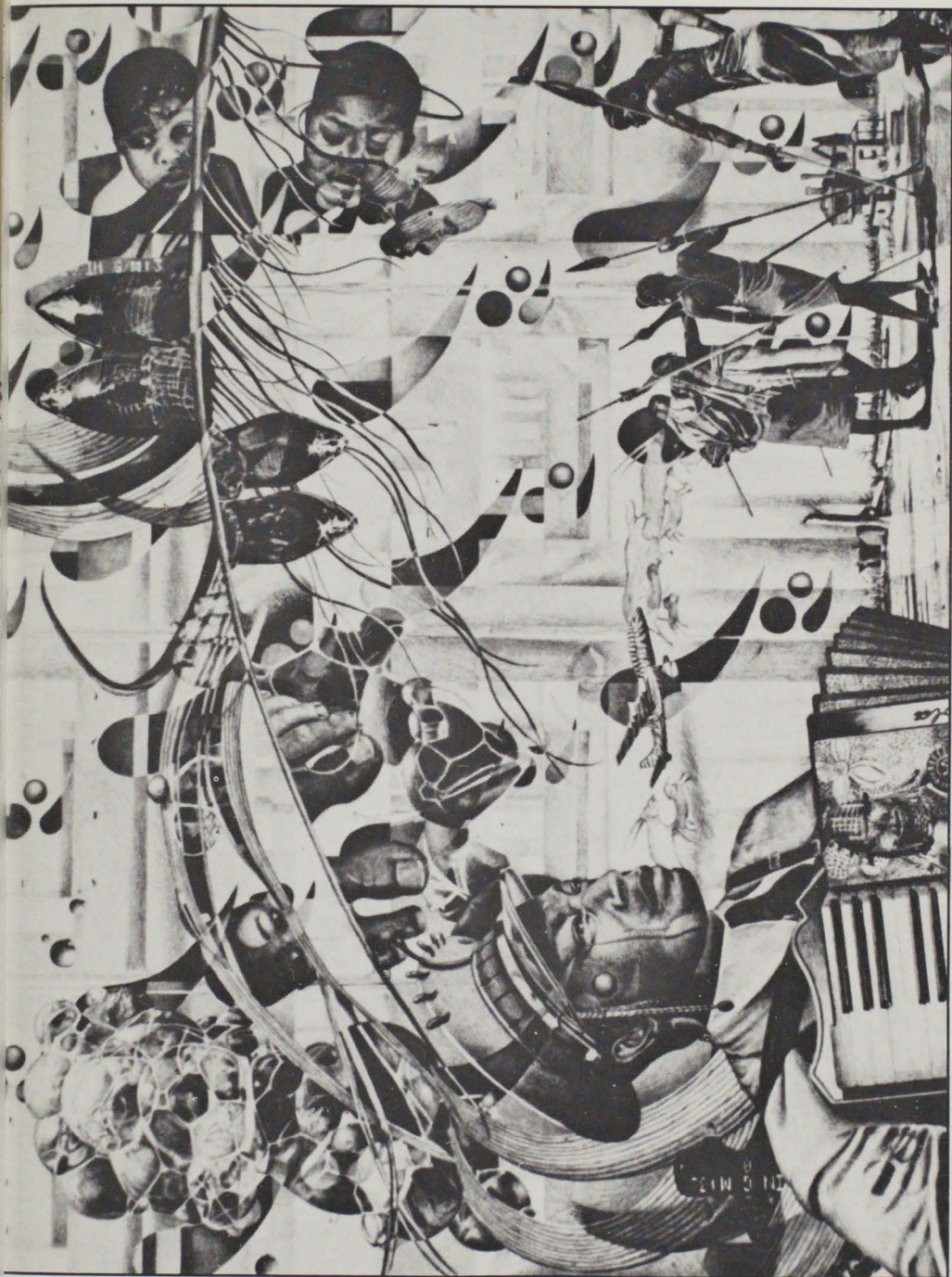
The money comes easier in Calgary, and I understand the girls are going north this spring. The old nuns, too, die unexpectedly of influenza. I take my customary lunch at my desk: high, flat noon, my cup of rain.

I'm not tired of Baby. I'm just tired. The nuns don't offer to babysit and neither do the whores. My parents send checks and have helped me buy a junior bed on time, for when she's older.

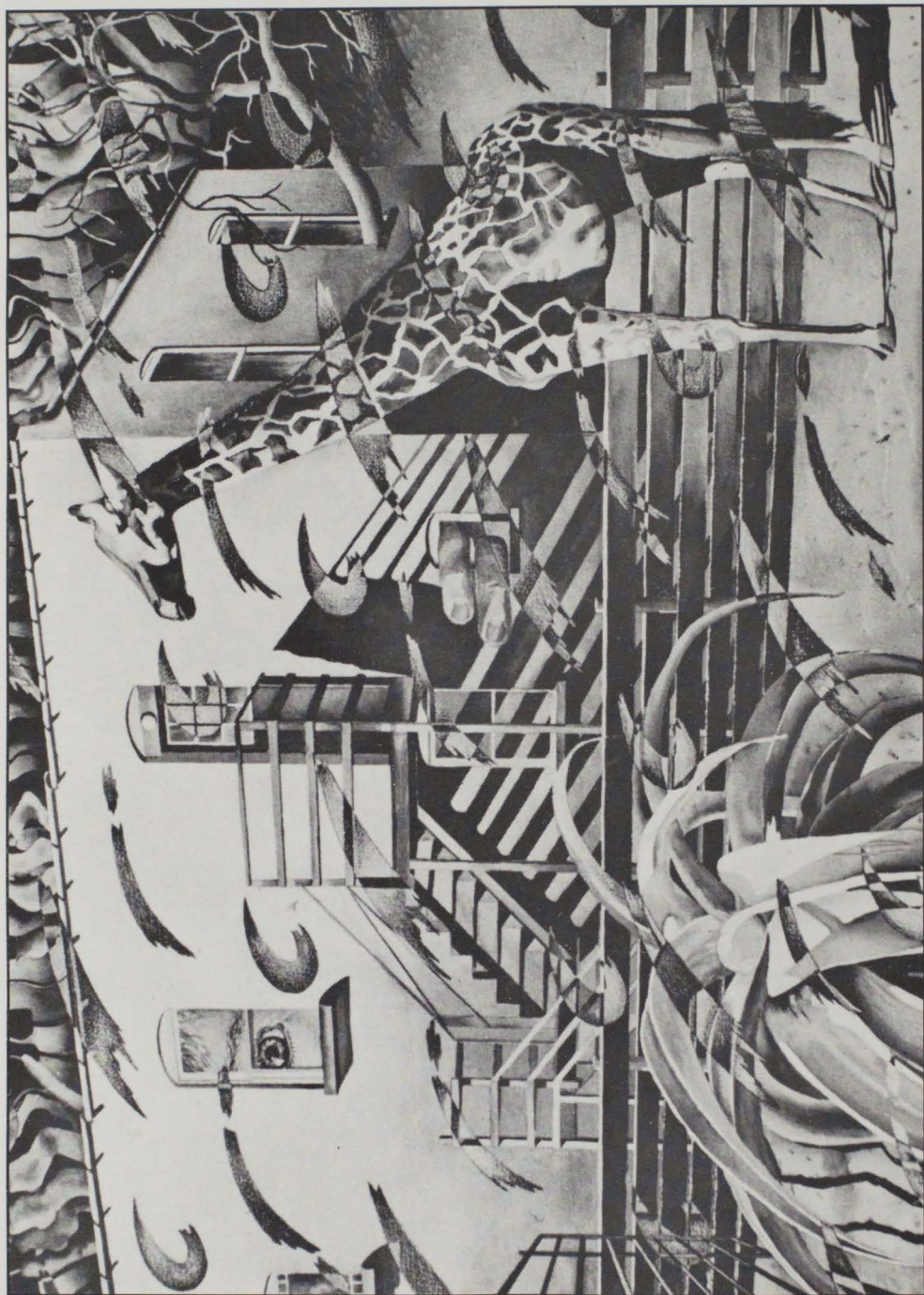
Her name is Alene, after the Indians. "Coeur d'Alene," I've found out, means "heart of an awl" or "needleheart." I like to think that the whole city, the river, the race, were named after her tiny, bounding heart. This hidden sunless town is the Body broken for us, and Alene is the heart, is the Blood; I drink in all of this and remember him. But I choke on the Host, sweet Mary! This bitter Eucharist, the reeling wafer that is Idaho, not my home. Tonight I ache with milk. Alene's eyes begin to follow me everywhere, drunken blue in her hot skull.

Tonight I'll walk out in the street with Alene deep in ether. I'll stand out there squinting into the dark dark. And I'll pitch these words, finally, chuck the whole damn story into the air: my misfit, my lover, my daughter, my Idaho not mine, I throw you all toward where I imagine the moon, and I wait, my face turned toward the trees, for it all to rain back down in pieces, bread for the moon.

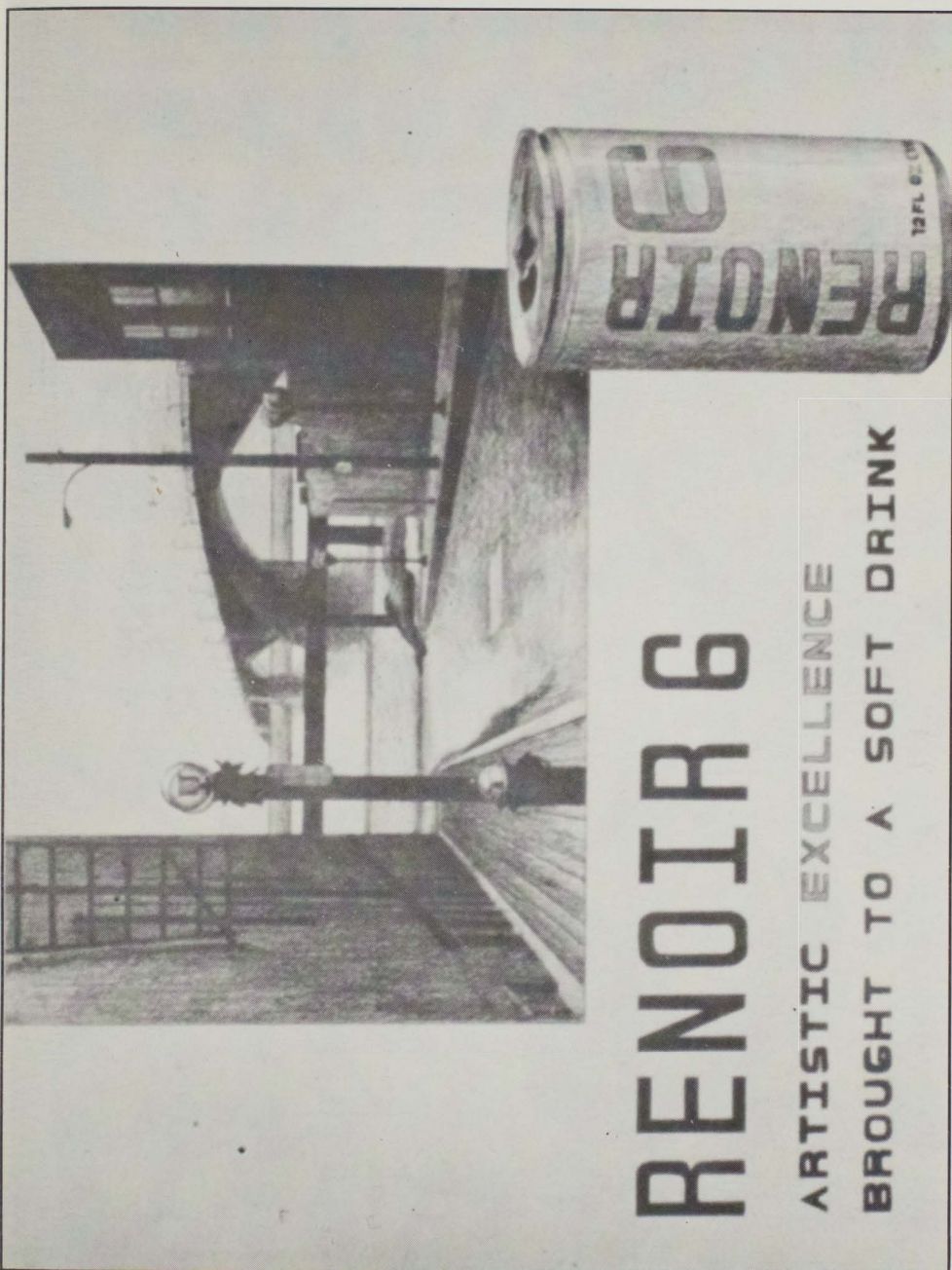
Jennie VerSteeg



Metamorphoses: Barbara Karst



Urban Utopia: Barbara Karst

A black and white photograph of a street scene. On the left, a building with a dark roof and a street lamp with a globe are visible. A large, stylized can of Renoir 6 soft drink is positioned on the right side of the image, partially overlapping the text. The can is labeled 'RENOIR 6' and '12 FL. OZ.'.

RENOIR 6

ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE
BROUGHT TO A SOFT DRINK

Renoir 6: Barbara Karst



My Country: Barbara Karst

Skipping Stones

Some skitter across the virgin sheet
of water rapid-fire as the wingbeat
of a ruffed grouse. Some veer
like stricken kamikaze planes, plunge,
then flutter to the grave. Some shave
the river's thin skin, releasing with each
touch a hidden light, shimmering
like a flock of ladybugs in flight.

Like children, each finds its own way.
Like snowflakes, no two are the same.
Find the curve that says to the finger
"You are my purpose," a stone that holds
deep in its crystal center a longing
to be deemed worthy of the other bank.

Mark Rozema

*Trials**By Water*

Whatever fills her with air
fills us with loathing.
Her head's in a chink
in a wave, a bouyant
annoyance. We don't expect her
to drop, to touch a good heel
on the bottom and stand there, breathless,
while we consider rescue.

By Fire

We give him three days
to heal his bandaged hands
from the inside out. Then
we'll assume he did nothing:
never held the wrong hand
or touched the wrong horse
or wrapped his palms,
because we said to,
around a red-hot poker.

By Combat

If he walks enough paces
into the future, we'll grant him
a second, someone to cock his pistol
since his hands shake so,
since he's claiming he can't win
at what he's never done before.
if we see through the sunup
the head plugged just there, mid-brow,
we'll believe he's done well,
a lucky first strike, here and now.

By Jury

The witnesses have that look
in their eyes. So we've got one
too, like we've all seen a bad thing
before, like we're about to clean up
what's been left on our lawns:
paper through the trees, toys
in a mudpile. The hundred stories
hunch up; they all sound good.
Then she turns to face us
with the face that comes to us
from dreams we thought we'd abandoned,
the face that pleads again for mercy.

Nance Van Winckel

Shore Report

All sand, all a gloss on memory
 walking in the dunes is forbidden
 the slim grass too fragile

a sun that fails to convince, green filtered
 that boy, his ropy limbs such ease
 ecological darts

now clears, humidity sucked halfway across
 Atlantic, gray haired and stubborn
 aluminum chairs, striped

come child not so far into the foam
 come child come child
 lotion, salt, fresh,

all sand, all a gloss on memory
 and the board found his head
 blood in rivulets

sea mixed, no body recovered at that depth
 horseshoe crabs, beached, broken helmets
 come child not so far

string tied to the gull's foot, so ache, heart
 salt pump and the wave curls
 poor man's kite

home now and the sand in secret grooves
 shiver in the cold spray, rub
 soap hates the hand

waves advance like rolls of film, kids smiling
 come child not so far
 shy sun new season

all sand, a gritty gloss on memory

Jeffrey Skinner

Greetings from the Edge of Ridicule

Greetings from the edge of ridicule!
I salute you, you who are always sure
of your footing and your words, how in hell
do you do it? And I salute the rest of you,
you stutterers, you twisted by disease
or doubt, pushing a grimace down the street
as if the very air were painful. I have been both
and often slip back into a variety of faces.
What I like best is balancing with my eyes
closed, fully aware that I exist only
because of whatever love I have stumbled on
and if it stopped suddenly I would be out
like a light. If I tell you I have big feelings
it is just so that you can make fun of me,
not from pride: the truth, God help me, keeps
changing its mind, but it is always the same
mind. Sometimes I love this world so much
I become everything I see! Walking
a steel fence in the middle of the city,
in the middle of a clear day, my three women
in my arms, my hair graying and the sharp
features of youth gone, I get the strangest looks.

Jeffrey Skinner

Beyond All Ken

I don't know anything about banquets
given thousands of years ago by Egyptian aristocrats
living in villas along the Nile.

I wouldn't know about dressing for such an affair—
the chaos and clatter of metal combs and curling
irons, the feel of the cool, vaguely
transparent, linen shift gathered into place;
or lining my eyes, for instance, with black kohl
kept in monkey-shaped jars, a naked servant girl
fixing gold jewelry to my ears.

I wouldn't know how to fasten an herbal-scented
wax cone on top of my head or how that wax-and-oil
mixture of perfumed spices might feel slowly melting
during the evening, the rich heady fragrance
of the pomade released, seeping
like an anointing, about my head.

Date wine might be sweet and penetrating, and roasted
long-horned ox astonishingly tender and rare.
But I can't say for certain.

And how could I know about the boy
(dead now for thousands of years) on the other side
of the banquet hall, that boy for whom one dressed?
or the excitement, increased by the noise
of the double clarinets and sistrums,
the heavy metal discs swinging from the dancers'
pigtails, that excitement of imagining again
and again the hidden and mysterious
furry place of his body?

I've never been in a courtyard, in a garden
beside a pool where blind fish slip
in and out of cavernous lily roots.
I've never seen the moon shining
with its white hallelujahs through myrtle trees

or making jubilant shadows of cedars
along a path. I've never listened
for the footsteps of a young Egyptian boy.
I don't know how his voice might sound, whispering
my name over and over to me, or the manner
in which he might kiss the perfumed oil
from beneath my ears, take it on his lips
eventually to my breasts and belly,
how he would part his clothing
to free himself as he eased forward
and forward, his dark mouth open above me
finally in a long cry as if he had swallowed
the moon and become at once all its streaming
celebrations. One might neither recognize
nor care for anything else in the world
at that moment, not era nor time nor person,
not the blowing myrtles nor the resurrection
of the river, not the fetch cat yowling
behind the stable, not the greyhounds
baying in their cage.

But I've never been to Egypt or slept
beside a boy four thousand years ago
beside the Nile, and all I know of such affairs
is simply everything I know to say
I do not know.

Pattiann Rogers

Because You Understand This

Everything is watching you—the mockingbird,
the wood warbler, the jay, of course, the crawfish frog,
carrion beetle, fungus beetle, the hanging fly;
everything is watching you, even the thick draw
of the tulip, the sunless center of the lidded
harebell bud, the underwater witch's nest—crowfoot,
bogbean—lungless salamander, the smallest circle
in the wound shell of the copper snail. Everything
stares. Each ring of the jingle shell, the stalk
of milk thistle, the blowing pine-needle
shadows reaching forward, forward and back
on the stone walk, all are watching you.

Deep in its cave-stream, beneath its clear scale
and socket-skin, in its most impenetrable
unawareness, the eyeless glass fish attends,
and the tailless tenrec and the leaf-nosed
bat and the ruby mandrake in the dark
on the other side of the earth, even they.
And that which possesses only jawbone, naked
teeth in the north pasture, chipped femur,
scattered vertebra, that which possesses less
in the commodious muck of the pondbottom,
they too keep you in focus.

Everything, even the blind retina of underground
granite, even the ocular roll
of the thunderhead, even the solid
cold lens of the grey moon. . .

Pattiann Rogers

Sweat Socks from Hell

They were like trumpets announcing something
to cows asleep in a snowstorm.
Wherever they passed were bent little scorchmarks
and athletes hopping on their amazed toes.
Fountains embraced them with a kind of sneeze
and spit them out again
and were ever after lustful, greedy for coin
or virgins—of which there are now so few.
Everywhere populations buckled their boots
and sent up for word of new powers
to set against these marauding equipages,
for new kinds of foot death and disease
with which their favor might be bought.
But it was no good; they kept coming. At last
everyone could see them, an army of random quote marks
on the move, burning and sweating
into everything as they cackled and ran and ran.

Christopher Howell

The Imp of the Unquestionable

If you ask me
my favorite color
or what a bird said
crossing some endless palm
of silver sky and just barely
holding its soul in
as it struggled not to realize
it was flying; I have to hand you
my bird-like failure of response—
so be advised.
If you ask me nothing
that comes to mind
but, rather, something that doesn't,
something your mother was saving
for a deathbed revelation
that would smash the family
and send her cackling
maniacly into the afterlife
like a perverse bondsman jumping his own
bail, something no one knew
you fool enough to ask
until you did it and all the wine
and blood and cum of living
mauled the perfect lace and pressed
zipped perfect trousers;
be advised—I'm so forgetful
even St. Jerome has trouble
forgiving my moral banana peels
and slights. but the unrepentant paisley
of this voice is trouble
passing itself on
to you. It doesn't care to say
that shakes of its deceptions
or the shapes of absences its life
is buying up, even if they're yours.
You have your own pain
and, after all, its beauty is always more filling
than the sufferings of strangers—nevermind

they are inside you using your name
and your typewriter
for the suicide notes. So don't ask.
Just hold your tongue
in your hands as if Immaculate Announcement
had finally devised a heart you could swallow
like knowledge
and all the questions you will no longer need
you will no longer need.

Christopher Howell

Dawn of The Flying Pigs

The summer Jim and Buzzy roughnecked, Jennifer went with them out to the oil fields and sat in Jim's old station wagon reading by a kerosene lantern and eating raw turnips. She was pregnant with me and craved turnips. On their breaks Jim and Buzzy sprawled out in the back of the car and listened to the Cardinals' games on the radio while they ate their sandwiches. Then they slept until Rufus Troop blew his whistle, or they just lay there, too tired and depressed to talk, looking out at that big steel derrick lit up brighter than day and glaring like an altar of steel, and they thought about Sandra Goddard, Rowena Pribble, and all the trouble Jim had got us into showing off.

Thanks to Jim, that had been The Year of The Hard On at Mt. Vernon Township High School. Sandra Goddard and Rowena Pribble, the yearbook editors, just made it official by working a dozen good ones into Golden Memories and Sports Moments, airbrushing cars, school buses, buildings, hillsides, and the map of Illinois. If you turn the yearbook this way and that, you can find them lurking everywhere.

But the honors went to Jim. Sandra and Rowena succeeded in sneaking one of his into the yearbook. You can't see it at a glance, because there are so many people in the picture, a foldout with a hundred people crowded into the locker room; the Rams had just won the Christmas tournament—and like everyone in the crowd, you tend to gaze at the trophy the boys on the team hold over their heads.

Jim has an arm in the air, though he's so far from the trophy that, after you've spotted the erection and look again at his smile and the peculiar way he is standing, bent out from those around him, you suspect that he raised his hand to get your attention. Sandra and Rowena had doctored the photo, using certain Polaroid pictures which had floated around school that year. But Jim had been, indeed, the subject of those Polaroid pictures, and everyone recognized him, for by then he was very well known; that is, that part of him, which had become a legend in its own time, as they say. Jim was expelled three weeks short of graduation—not just because of the yearbook but for everything else that year, for turning the school into a place haunted by hard ons and rumors of hard ons, for all the stunned fascination, the frenzy and adulation. (Sandra and Rowena graduated, went off to college, got married, etc.)

When Jim's mother protested (that's Rita, whom I called Grandma when I was a child), the principal told her that not graduating should be the least of Jim's worries. Twenty-odd daddies, uncles, and big brothers hoped to get their hands on him—and probably would, when the time was right.

Aside from those individuals, a lot of people, hundreds, wished that Jim would just vanish from the face of the earth. That is, go back to California.

But Jim couldn't go anywhere. Broke and desperate, Rita and Jim

had loaded his three little sisters and all the clothes and dishes and other things they had room for into and onto their old station wagon and, breaking down every twenty or thirty miles and waiting for charity to get them going again, spent the summer of 1969 going from southern California to southern Illinois. That's another story.

They were true Californians and knew they were going the wrong way but they had no choice. They would have gone on welfare in California but Jim's father was crazy and had vowed to kill Rita and all the children. So they would live with Rita's half-blind old mother, Jim would finish his last year of high school, he would get a good job.

But the boys and girls at Mt. Vernon Township High School had never seen anything like Jim. He was golden-haired and golden-skinned; he was tall and strong and good-looking, a great athlete, and one day after football practice someone had a radio in the locker room and on the way to the showers, with a towel around his waist, Jim started dancing, the towel fell off, he kept dancing, and he was doomed.

Jim did vanish, as so many people wished he would, but not back to California. Rufus Troop gave him and Buzzy jobs where no one could find Jim, out in the middle of nowhere.

Buzzy later became my father in a sense, though I've never called him that. He graduated but it didn't matter, he wasn't ready for anything, least of all so-called life. He would gladly have stayed in high school another year or two. On the basketball squad he had been good at guarding and dribbling, but he was too shy to take a shot. Buzzy is in the famous locker room picture, though he can't be seen. In Jennifer's yearbook (Buzzy and Jim threw theirs away) he showed me where he was. "Right . . ." putting his finger on a space between two people, "there." With a magnifying glass I saw a white sliver which might be half of a face.

By August of that summer, Buzzy and Jennifer were Jim's last and only friends. But his showoff days were done, anyway. Everything was finished.

But nothing is ever finished. Time is layered. If you could live long enough and stand back far enough, you could probably even see stratifications. Jim didn't live long enough to see any stratifications, wouldn't have had any idea what I'm talking about. Though the night he got torn up pulling pipe he did learn the past is never finished with us.

An oil rig at night is spectacular in a glaring, outlandish way, with lights strung up on the derrick and around the edge of the drilling platform like footlights on a stage, though the only audience out there are the animals that come to take a look, and the woods itself which winds through the county like an endless snake. (All this is from what Jennifer told me. She planned to write a book about it, someday, lots of books about everything.)

The rig is encased in a tremendous shrill ringing shell of steel noise from an engine so powerful it can turn the drill a mile down in the earth. The men stuff cotton in their ears and tie bands around their heads with flaps over their ears under their hard hats to try keeping the noise out,

but it's impossible, for they're immersed in the noise like fish in a bowl filled with mercury. The men yell back and forth just as if they can hear each other—it takes a long time to get used to the idea that there's no way you can be heard. Even after they start using hand signals they forget and yell at each other.

They have to pull pipe if they hit rock. The drilling stops and they pull all those long steel pipes out of the hole one by one and pile them by the platform. Finally, out comes the big old drillhead, the thing that has been down in that unimaginable place boring deeper and deeper. The drillhead that grinds through rock looks like a bunch of fists studded with steel triangles. The men put this drillhead on the first length of pipe, stick it in the hole, and lower it down until there's room for another length of pipe up in the derrick and screw it to the first pipe. This goes on and on until they have a mile of pipe in the hole and the drillhead is ready to gnaw through solid rock. After they grind through the rock they put the other drillhead on. Back and forth. Sometimes that summer Jim and Buzz would be exhausted from pulling pipe night after night. Other times they just drilled smoothly along.

When Jim got hurt they had been pulling pipe all night. It was about 4 a.m. Jennifer had been reading, then dozed off. She didn't like being out there with them, but she had a premonition, which she kept to herself, and she was afraid to stay alone at night in the dinky little house the three of them were living in that summer. When she woke up she got out to pee and give the mosquitoes a chance to bite her right where you almost never put repellent. She was watching them work, not really watching but seeing without thinking about it.

Jim was running out, as they call it. When a length of pipe was pulled out of the hole up into the derrick, Jim looped a heavy chain around an end of it. Sometimes he just gave it a sling. Then the man at the controls of the winch hit the gas, fiercely yanking the chain and spinning the pipe to disconnect it. Then Jim ran out—grabbed the down-end of the pipe and skated down a muddy steel ramp off the platform, swung the pipe onto the top of the big stack that had already been pulled out, and on a signal the top end was released and the pipe clanged down into place.

All this happened very fast. They would get a rhythm, especially the ones who were young, strong, natural athletes like Jim, all the operations and movements blurring smoothly into each other.

They had been doing the same thing for several nights—hitting rock, pulling the pipe, then going through the rock, pulling the pipe, then hitting rock again. To break the monotony they had raced to see who could pull and run out with the most pipe in an hour—Jim won. After that, they brought speakers out of their cars and had some music. Jennifer didn't know how they could hear, inside all that noise. From the station wagon, the music and the noise wavered in and out of each other. The men had started working along with the music, not exactly in time with it but doing a kind of whirling, sloppy dance, sometimes fast, then steadying out,

then fast again. Sometimes the young guys would get caught up and go so fast and so hard that they wouldn't know until they stopped that it had emptied them out. Jennifer saw that Jim had got caught up with doing that. Sweating hard and gleaming like a piece of machinery, the fool had stripped down to his shorts and boots.

And Jennifer knew the instant it started, felt the realization form in her mind at the same time if not maybe even sooner than the idea occurred to Jim: he took off his shorts. She groaned, said out loud, "Oh Jim you idiot," trying to pierce that gleaming steel case of night air and noise and the yellow tin hat he wore. If he heard her, a murmur at the back of his mind, he ignored her.

The men clapped and whistled, of course. They stood looking up at the drilling platform just as if they were watching a show in a roadhouse. Those roughnecks no doubt watched with much the same unfamiliar emotional reaction which the high school boys had felt, a mixture of awe, confoundment, and a surging belligerence, ending with the same furious or cold resentment which guaranteed for Jim an enemy in every man, except Buzzy, who saw how big he was and how proud of it he was. And it was quite a show, swinging and swaying up there on the drilling platform—he knew how to get the most out of it, he had practiced a lot, the two of them put on quite a performance.

When Jennifer told me this, here she closed her eyes. In grief and dread of what happened next, I think. Though now, as I close my eyes, what happened is enhanced vividly. Inside all that incredible noise shines a steel cocoon of silence encasing the drilling platform. And I hear the same music I heard yesterday, almost miraculously, as I leaned back from the desk where I am writing this. I looked out the window of my room in the Hotel Tyrol in Madrid and heard, from down in the hotel kitchen, the Beach Boys singing I wish they all could be California girls—while Jim dances in the bright lights on the drilling platform, watching his hands automatically sling the chain around the pipe, then he spins on his heels and it happens.

The man operating the winch guns it half a second too soon. That's all it takes. The chain is loose, doesn't take bite on the pipe, and is yanked free of the pipe—the free end lashing straight out, and as Jim comes spinning the opposite direction something flies away out of the bright lights of the drilling platform, and as I close my eyes and see this I think of that custom of leaving a little window open in the room where a person is dying so the spirit can leave on its long flight.

Now there is that awful silence which comes when something final and forever irreparable happens and everyone realizes it at the same time. Jennifer is rising from where she squats beside the car. Jim turns again, slowly, like that last slow lap after a race, and he is looking down at himself now, too—before, he would only glance down when he was showing off, letting everyone else do all the looking. But now he takes a long, breathless look at it, more breathlessly than anyone in the past.

Jennifer runs toward the drilling platform. Buzzy and the others start

up the platform steps in that stunned, suspended way people approach calamity, as if it is a pit into which they might skid.

"My God, oh my God, what have you done?" Jennifer is yelling as she runs toward the platform. She tries to run up the muddy steel ramp and falls so hard she's afraid she has broken her chin, broken her left wrist, and killed the baby—me. No one notices she has fallen—they are all turned toward Jim—as Jennifer struggles up the ramp.

Jim is bent over, holding his hands between his legs. There is no blood. My God, how lucky, is Jennifer's first thought, how lucky, how lucky, how lucky. She is yelling but can't hear her own voice and the man on the drilling platform are talking too, she can see by the movement of their mouths, the veins standing out in their straining necks. He keeps turning away from the men as they try to see the front of him, until finally that isn't possible, he is surrounded, but he keeps turning anyway, then he sees Jennifer. His eyes are bulging, his lips are mashed flat against his teeth in an awful grimace unlike anything she has ever seen on his face or anyone's, his face is so rigidly flat the thought flashes through her mind that the chain struck his face, gouged out a part so cleanly his face can't bleed.

Then Jennifer saw what the men had no doubt already seen, blood dripping from between his fingers.

"Let me see," Jennifer yelled.

He turned away from her and she followed him in a circle, leaning forward and trying to take hold of his wrists. Another came up beside him, and one on the other side, holding him still, and Jennifer knelt down in front of him saying, "Let me see, you must let me see," and gripping his wrists she tried to pry his hands away from where they were cupped between his legs, which was impossible—all the men together couldn't have pulled his hands away.

Suddenly the big drill engine stopped, Rufus Troop had shut it off, which left only the generator, in contrast seeming to be barely a hum, and the radios which one of the men ran down to turn off, and when finally Jim let Jennifer take his bloody hands from between his legs, they saw at the same time, Jim looking down at himself and Jennifer kneeling between his knees, and the men crowding around to look, that the worst possible thing had happened. The chain had struck Jim just as he spun the opposite direction, shearing off the end of him.

"Oh Jesus," someone whispered. It hung straight down limp and headless. It looked like a finger drooling blood. Jim staggered and swayed forward, the men caught him and laid him down. Rufus Troop ran to the doghouse and got a first aid kit. They gave Jim a big wad of bandage to hold there and stop the bleeding.

Jennifer went down the steps of the drilling platform, wanting to run down them, to fly down them, but making herself go down them carefully, holding the rail. A pool of blackness ringed the ground close to the edge of the platform, the area shadowed from the lights on the derrick.

Jennifer could see absolutely nothing—she couldn't even see the ground itself as she lowered a foot off the bottom step. Then she was afraid to move because she couldn't see anything.

She went along the platform until she was to the corner, then she cut out at an angle and, back in the light again, ran as hard as she could to the car. She grabbed the kerosene lantern and with her hands shaking so badly she could barely control them, she tore a match from the book and tried to strike it. The little head napped off. She tried another, pinching the match-head—it didn't strike but smushed across the striking surface. She struck match after match, then threw that matchbook away and dug in the glove compartment for another one.

Finally she got the lantern lit. She ran back to the edge of the platform and shading her eyes with one hand against the glare of lights on the derrick, she started searching the ground. Cigarette butts, matchsticks, cardboard cartons, candy bar wrappers, pop bottles and aluminum cans, ripped up paper bags, a whole loaf of bread with the end of the wrapper torn open maybe by animals and the slices fanned out like a hand of cards, and boards and broken pieces of equipment slung off the platform, thousands of crumpled and twisted things that Jennifer had to look at closely, even reaching down and picking things up and moving them slightly because what she was looking for might be hiding in the shadow of even the littlest thing. And she had to be very careful where she walked, looking twice carefully each time she took a step.

On the platform Jim wailed, sounding less like himself or any person than some animal that the men up there were torturing just to hear its desperate suffering and the words, "Oh my God, my God, my God," that came out as he gasped for breath.

Then she heard them tromping on the platform. They had picked him up and were going to carry him down to a car and start the long drive into Mt. Vernon. Running up the platform steps as they were bringing him down, she told them to wait, that she was going to find it, she had to find it. They just kept coming, making her back down, and she ran beside them, saying it over and over, and they just continued toward one of the cars.

She ran back to the place where she had been looking. She held the lantern closer to the ground, stooping down as if utterly fascinated by the dusty earth and all the pitiful rubbish.

They were putting him into the back seat of a car. Jennifer ran over to them and yelled at them to please, please wait. One of them looked at her, his eyes blank, his face as vacant as a cow's, as if the words Jennifer spoke with exaggerated, absurd slowness and distinctness were quite beyond his grasp. "Wait. Give me . . . two minutes. That's all it will take. Two . . ." putting her face right in his, "minutes."

"He's bleeding to death, goddamnit," one of them said. "There's not time to wait. We got to get him to the hospital."

Holding her hands over her head Jennifer screamed, "I'll stop the bleeding! I know how to stop the bleeding!"

This baffled them.

"I'm a nurse!" she screamed, amazed and thankful that she had popped out with that—for it worked! One of them even said, trancelike, his lips slowly moving as if these words were the first he had ever spoken, "A nurse."

"But first," she said, "I must find it."

Two of them nodded. They understood!

"And then I'll . . ." She didn't finish because she had no idea what she would do. "Just wait. Wait. Don't take off. I'll go find it . . ." backing away, still holding up both hands.

"We'll come help you find it," one of them said.

"No! There's too great a risk of . . . trampling. The light is bad. I have to look with this"—holding up the lantern—"and I have to look . . . up close"—she held up her hand in front of her face—"like this. So just wait here. I'll find it in just a minute."

She backed away and they stared at her as if hypnotized, and as she went back to the side of the platform she looked several times over her shoulder.

Before she was into the center of the area where she thought it might be, she started searching, for she had really no idea where it might be except she had seen it flying in this general direction. As she bent down she realized that the area she intended to comb had gotten larger, and that the longer she searched, the more area she would have to include. A big spider going along stopped when it saw her and stood its ground.

The car started. "No!" she screamed. But she couldn't move from where she stood. If she ran to stop them, she was certain she would step on it, crush it, grind it into the earth.

They drove down toward the deep-rutted road and stopped by the generator. She heard shouting in the car, an argument that ended with one of them yelling at the top of his lungs that they couldn't leave the goddamned thing running with nobody the hell out here. One of them got out of the car and turned off the generator. The bright lights on the derrick went out. Jennifer stood in the lantern's dim circle.

The sense of urgency expanded all around her as in the darkness the woods came closer, came right up to her. She stopped searching, straightening with difficulty against the pain in her back. Holding the lantern high, she looked up at the derrick, hulking even larger in the dark . . . and she realized that in combing the ground she had moved out too far from the platform, into the trampled and rutted grass.

She went back closer and pressing hard with her arm against the small of her back, leaned down again and resumed searching, worrying that where she was looking now was an area which she had already searched. "I need some kind of system," she said out loud. But maybe just once

over wasn't good enough. All right. She started to get down on her hands and knees. Then she froze.

At the same time something moved through the black air above her head—how close she couldn't tell but she heard the soft muffled sound and felt the subtle stir of wind as it passed—she realized that something which she had passed over a minute ago was a strange object, some kind of strange bug or maybe a grape, but it didn't look like what she was searching for, didn't look like anything, really. And now she was certain she was standing on it.

Bending down as far as she could, so that she could see the space beside her right foot, she placed her foot there and looked at the flat grass where her foot had been. Nothing. She repeated the process with her left foot and sighed with relief that she hadn't been standing on it. Then she carefully turned and bending down as far as she could . . . she found the object again.

It bore no resemblance to what it was. It was just a little scrap, not even the complete piece of him that was torn off, though maybe it was, having yielded to that mystery of nature which everyone knows who has butchered or watched a butcher work, that all the parts and pieces, when they're cut and torn apart, make a sad little pile much smaller than their sum.

She drove as fast as the station wagon would run, the old thing wallowing over the road some farmer had made bringing equipment through the woods to a patch of fields. She felt the baby struggling around, quite disgruntled at all this. When she reached the gravel road she floorboarded the gas and the car slowly gained speed until it was lumbering down the narrow road at a flat out 50 miles an hour.

She had driven about ten miles when she saw the other car stopped in the road and the men standing beside it with the doors open. She hit the brakes and the station wagon's rear end started coming around. She let off, blinked the headlights, and blaring the horn, passed as far as possible to the other side of the road without sliding off into the ditch. The men scrambled out of the way as she roared by.

She finally got it stopped and backed up, almost banging into the front of the other car. They just looked at her as she came up. "Well?" she said. "Well? What's wrong?"

Buzzy mumbled something, it sounded like he said He's dead. "What? What's that?" she said, her voice rising as she cut through them to the back door of the car where Buzzy stood, and he spoke again, low and confidential as if not wanting Jim to hear, "He's dead. He was drinking some whiskey and he just up and died."

She was speaking but she had no idea then or later what she said, maybe it was only a shrill eeeee which had started to be He is not dead but didn't get completely or even partway formed as she shoved Buzzy out of the way and moved into the back seat over Jim as he lay on his side with

his legs drawn up. She couldn't listen for his breathing because she couldn't make herself be silent, hearing far away herself saying over and over No no no . . . until he moved, she was certain he moved, a twitch in his shoulder.

"He's not dead," she announced for them outside the car and for Jim, too, inside that whiskey-smelling darkness in which he lay, the darkness seeming to emanate from him as he went farther and farther from her. She got out of the car. "Don't move him. Don't start the car. Wait right here"—though she already knew the car couldn't get around the station wagon.

In the station wagon she carefully moved the Tupper Ware box so that she could sit in front of the glove compartment. That night she had brought turnips in the box. Now it contained the little piece of him. She dug into the glove compartment, throwing out bottle caps one by one, a can opener, pop-top rings, a Marlboro box, matchbooks, two pencil stubs, and finally, after everything was out, trolling with her fingernails she snagged a piece of thread, rolled it between her thumb and forefinger, and when she picked it up, the needle was still on the thread.

She brought the lantern with her and had one of them light it, then told one of them to go to the other side of the car and hold down Jim's shoulders and for another to lean down on his knees and hold him still. After having one of them scoot the front seat as far forward as possible, she squeezed into the back, kneeling on the floorboard and leaning over him.

He woke up, or it was more like coming back. The whiskey had already hit him pretty good, but he realized she was there, realized she was Jennifer, knew where he was more or less, and they talked to each other, their voices high and strained, and he didn't understand what she meant when she told him what she planned to do, and when she leaned down and began, he lurched, bending double and closed on himself to protect himself from further pain.

She backed out of the car. They would have to get him out of there and hold him bent back over the hood of the car so she could get to him.

It took all four men to hold him still on the hood while Jennifer leaned down into his bloody groin, Buzzy holding the kerosene lantern in one hand while he lay on his side across Jim's chest, the lantern drawing the insects, curious at this spectacle, some even alighting on Jennifer's hands as she worked, a mosquito boring into her left wrist as she sewed the ragged little piece onto the ragged piece hanging out of him, the futility of it like a cloak of distance between Jennifer's mind and eyes, and the glinting needle and the pitiful black thread which she had used long, long ago it seemed, to sew a button on a dress, a button she had popped getting out of the car when she and Buzzy went to the grocery store one afternoon.

She didn't know how doctors went about lining up the jagged edges when they attempted the miracle of reattaching torn off parts. Just put the piece back on where it looks like it belongs and sew it on? Can

you somehow line up all the tiny blood vessels? This won't work, she told herself.

It was futile. Worse than futile, it was preposterous. When word got out, when the idiots holding Jim down on the hood of the car told everyone they knew, and when all the people in Mt. Vernon and in high school knew, they all would crow with laughter. And the people who knew Jennifer, beginning with her mother, would gloat upon this peculiar and infinite compounding of her humiliation.

But now it didn't matter what people would say and how they would laugh, and how this part of Jim's legend would become a legend in its own right, and how his maimed condition would haunt him privately and publicly—she could just imagine the cruel jokes, about trying to drill for oil with his dick, and the dangers of dancing with his dick sticking out, and a thousand other things just unimaginable. As she worked, sweat beading on her upper lip, holding her breath each time she pushed the needle through his flesh, she thought ahead to how she would maybe tell me this, someday, wondered how she could if I was one of them, not someone who could hear the story and know how all the absurdity and terror were counterbalanced on the hood of that car in the middle of nowhere by determination and its mercifully blinding aureole of dignity. Or how at least in that hour the one who is caught up by necessity, forgetting herself in action, is blinded temporarily by knowing that this one thing, in this one moment, is not only the right thing to do but the only thing in the world that can be done.

Driving on into Mt. Vernon, Buzzy at the wheel of the station wagon—the rest of them following in the other car—Jennifer rode in the back with Jim, lying beside him to hold him still. He had drunk all the whiskey and had passed hysteria to babbling, talking to Buzzy and Jennifer, continuing to talk when they tried to answer. As the sun came up he loudly asked if Buzzy saw what he saw. "What's that, Jim?" Buzzy called back. "Pigs, man, don't you see 'em?"

Jennifer saw what he meant. The clouds in the east weren't just mounds turning from dark gray to purple to blazing pink, with some vague resemblance to pigs—they were indisputably and purely a herd of pigs driven up from the night and being launched one by one, wind on the horizon scattering them across the sky.

Jerry Bumpus

Eidetic

The children went out into their world,
a ragged field they'd already explored,
already fought off other children for,
and found, as if left to them alone,
a sharp-eared, long-haired pony
looking at them with longing.
They'd wished for mornings like this,
their fathers and mothers gone,
the green grass wet, the sun not strong
enough to hurt, the perfect gift,
left without a catch, not so much
as distant relatives to thank.
Their horse. Theirs. Eidetic.
What they didn't know they'd asked to have,
here, now and no one saying get,
get, go on home, it's mine.
And tame. As they approached
their eyes and the eyes of the horse
wound toward one another like lovers.
Their hands found their places
over the horse's mane, fetlock, small back
and haunch, their mouths still in wonder
until one of them wanted to ride,
and then another, and then them all
until one of them found the courage
to climb on. All morning they rode
over the trampled grass, they thought
of nothing else, they couldn't get enough.
When the horse began to tire, stumble,
falter, fall, they kicked it on,
pulled it farther by its cheeks
and backwards by its tail,
they picked up sticks to beat it back to life,
they went so far they never could return,
they lied to one another about how to make it work.

Dara Wier

A Long Time More

I will say to you let's go
when we are dead together

let's not be dead any longer,
not there with all the already gone,

not where nothing we want we'll know,
no more I have to have this now,

no more not one time more not ever.
Back where we've come from,

back there we'll go.
We will be thirsty again together

and find food and clothes and comfort,
and this time take time

this time neither too fast
this time ever more slow.

Dara Wier

Water

The bass, the leech,
the mite, string algae,
schistozomes,

the cold current
on your toes.

It would be
easy.
Many parts
aren't named.

We are
not walking.

And green
won't stop us
down there.

I tell you,
it would be easy
to find the sand
all around.

Ears full.
So small.

The fish might come.

Somewhere
in the belly.
The oily sound
of all those
capillaries.

To see with flat eyes
the smooth hills
and a sky

broken and waving.

Those giants up there.
Kneeling.

John Melvin

1207 Muscatine Avenue

It's the wall I couldn't face for years.
Once I tried, but the street bore
my name and cars that said it going by.
Windows bare sunlight to see just me
and cobwebs built in jest. Maybe
this house was in the last town, near
White River, sunset aimed until
siding blushed my color and I left.
Footsteps mean what they sound
up hard stairs. I can't forget
today's cop, his eyes staring me back
to childhood. He said act sane or I'll
tow your car back two states.
Don't you have a home, don't you?

I can't tell companies my spine
is electric, that I want to shut
it down on the floor where I try
to leave my shadow. That wall never
winked waiting years for me to come,
share its night, to cradle that light
we know is a child who cannot fall asleep.

John Melvin

Listen

I want you to understand me.
Even though you are no one.
The sky won't even stay blue
anymore. It keeps
changing its plans.

It's like that, wanting things to work out.
Someone goes for a walk
to keep from suicide,
and nothing changes. A voice
says, "I am responsible
for my feelings," until feelings
are a road overgrown with clover.
You wouldn't go down that way.

Because you are no one,
there will be no magic tonight.
Nothing will change.
Nothing wants you,
not even me,
and I beg for things.

Today the sky is gray.
You, who are nothing,
it isn't sad, it isn't
worth anger how the
roses turn brown.
You are so many colors
trying to find the right one
as if anyone cared.

There are whole fields of clover.

John Melvin

Photograph of the Bruised Child

He looks out, with fifteen months
behind him, through a slit on the
right side of his face, the lid
puffed and flared around his eye,
purple and red, thick clouds
around the flattened bulge
of a half-set sun. The image
is like a miracle, against such
perfection of skin.

You have seen him, he is shown now
everywhere, at checkout stands
in grocery stores, in newsprint
commuters thumb on trains, and what
strikes you first is not the bundle
of burst capillaries, each one fine
as a baby's hair, but what is left
untouched, the clear deep window
of his knowing other eye.

You love the ripe familiar pinch
of fat creased smoothly under his arm,
and you notice the faint blue, like shadow,
where a hand was laid on his shoulder.
But always to the full wide eye
you return, as he must, to see
clearly what will stay with him.

Theodore Worozbyt

Waking

I.

I am the woman
in a house with no flowers
who looks in the mirror
and then looks away

I am the woman who crosses her legs
at evening and waits
for the knock on the door,
who picks up a comb
and feels neither the comb
nor her hair;
who waits.

My vocation could be love
or poetry. Once
my fingers sprouted blossoms—
before I fell into this sleep.

My sisters are gone
I sit alone and cannot sing
my legs have lost the rhythm of dance
I wait up late, asleep, awake.

II.

Sometimes
when the man beside me sleeps
my eyes come alive
in the dark room.
I see animals in the corners,
I see the floor stir
like earth moving, and I almost
begin to speak.

Now it is time: Alone I must arise,
lift the floorboards and join them
at the lines of fine, chocolate grain.

I will take the sheets
and make them into sails,
lie down in the warm
brown shadow of the prow,
and street softly with one hand
into the blue-purple of sea and air,
toward the green flank
of my old home.

Natania Rosenfeld

In Lithuania

Oma remembers light falling
through birches, fingering moss
in the wood near Memel

and the shining heads of mushrooms,
speckled moon faces
she gathered with her thick hands.

Her braids smelled of pine and salt,
slid through the grass,
switched her thighs when she stood.

At night her hair flowed,
a dark river
through Opa's hands.

*

By the Baltic Sea, her children
ran picking shells,
white and pink like ears.

They knelt in the dunes,
digging for chips of amber.
The sand was fine as flour.

Wind blew across the waves
and bent the grasses: thin shadows
against the ground.

Natania Rosenfeld

Hard Feelings

Will leaned over his log book in the thin milky light of the fluorescent beam. It was five-thirty in the morning, not quite day, and Caroline sat braiding her hair in the center of the sagging bed. She wore faded blue longjohns and there was an oily stain on one knee. They had been arguing and now there was a lull in the argument. The radio was tuned to the flight weather: winds and ceilings and visibility.

"She's acting like . . . like a chippy," Will said. He didn't look at Caroline when he said this. He scratched something in the log book with a mechanical pencil.

"She's your *daughter*," Caroline said.

One of the departing guests came out on the porch one cabin over. He sang, "Zip-a-de-do-dah." Caroline pictured him: the portly margarine executive from San Jose. He hadn't liked her using real butter.

"You packed the flight breakfast?"

"It's in the plane."

"Use the rest of that coho for dinner, 'ey?"

He'd almost eradicated his elegant tidewater Virginia drawl.

"I think I know what to do for dinner, Will."

"You must speak to her, Caroline, or we'll board her down in the village for the rest of the summer. She's a distraction to the guests."

"If she summers down there, so do I."

"We need you here. What would I do without you?"

"Hire someone."

"Caroline."

"I don't want her down there. The kids're up to no good. The keggers go on all night. Did you know they stole a skiff two weeks ago? They went across to the old village in bad weather."

Will shut his log book and, with military precision, placed his pencil in his chest pocket. He clicked the flashlight and they were in the dawn shadows, softer light, returning Will's face to the way Caroline preferred to see him, still handsome, his hair over his forehead drifting a little silver, the intensity of his nettled eyes hidden by the dark.

"Dear," he said. He sat close to her on the bed, conspiratorially. "Speak with her. We're in business here. Can you do this for me?"

"I'll see," Caroline said. It was the best she could do. The word *chippy* still reverberated in the room, like circles in an eddy around a sassy fish jumping.

Caroline walked down through the princess pine and swordfern to the river and beyond to the spit. The sun was out and this was the time of afternoon when the sun struck the river. The sun was not out often. She fished through the big pockets of her apron and found her Raybans. Through the sunglasses the cedar trees seemed dark and monstrous, the

glaze on the riffles like a photographic negative. This was a time of day she considered hers exclusively. She'd cleaned up after lunch, assembled and measured the ingredients for the bouillabaisse, and baked three loaves of Irish soda bread. The last guests had flown out at dawn. Will was due back soon, from Vancouver, with two new guests who'd started their day at O'Hare in Chicago. The spit ran parallel to the bank with a tongue of shallow warm water lapping in between. Granite stones studded the bank. Two flat-bottomed river boats—*Tupelo Honey* and *Chinacat Sunflower*—were moored to a stunted cottonwood. Caroline tried to remember the last time she listened to Van Morrison. She pictured a moist summer dusk at a commune near Hagerstown, the women whipping a flowered bedsheet for a tablecloth over a door-and-sawhorse table in the sloping yard, the men smoking together near the woodpile. She and Will had been on their way to Canada, to a new life on the edge of the wilderness. It was just a dream that had spread like gossip among people their age then. Birch hadn't been weaned. They'd had a microbus loaded down with all their belongings and a cashier's check for five thousand dollars, all the fortune in the world.

Caroline sat down in one of the low canvas camp chairs, which were frayed and bleached with the weather. Someone had left a *New Yorker* face down on the beach next to a grizzly track. The track was about eight inches longer than the magazine. It was old. The claw depressions, little moon sickles, were still sharp, but the edges around the heel were crumbling. She peeled away her apron and rolled her culottes high to take advantage of the sun. Her legs were pale and though it was July she still had what Will called her winter coat, fine strawberry blond hair which grew in an almost invisible layer from her knees down.

Birch was upriver a few hundred yards, sunning her fourteen-year-old body on a flat black boulder. She didn't have her top on. Caroline took off her Raybans to be sure. Birch sat cross-legged and stroked sunscreen on her shoulders and arms. Her breasts were really *there* this year. Her hair was Caroline's hair: kinky and floating, not quite red. They were both glad of that. The green river pooled behind her boulder and beyond that there was a stretch of whitewater and above that, dense hemlock and spruce which cut the view. She could only see the very highest section of dirty blue glacial ice on one mountain.

Caroline stood up and yelled. "Get dressed. Your Dad'll be here soon."

Birch didn't respond, so she yelled louder. She didn't like yelling, but the river noise was always there, its crash and caterwaul buffering bird and animal sounds, human voices. The only louder noises were motors, the outboards, the plane, the pandemonium of the generator late at night.

Caroline heard the plane long before she saw it, the swooping drone of the engine as Will sparred with the mountains' eccentric air currents. Birch stood up on the boulder and tipped her breasts back into the bathing suit top. Caroline drooped back into the chair and imagined what they were seeing from the air: the green slash of the valley, female, fertile,

against the bold snowy coast range mountains. Her argument with Will slinked around in her thoughts like a scolded dog at dinner time.

The plane pounced above the flatwater a few hundred yards downstream before splashing down, each pontoon spraying a sunny fan of water over the wings. Will would never land so sloppily. Caroline gathered her apron and the magazine and walked down the spit and through the cottonwoods to the trail.

"A ride to write home about," the first man said. He was the older one, the father, and he wore a fishing vest with blond-colored flies perched on the flypatch. He was ready. His aluminum rod cases clanked as he alighted from the plane. "Hello, hello," he said to Caroline, pumping her hand. "I'm Joe. Joe Regalo." He wore a crusty wedding band which pressed into her palm. "This is my son Steve. He's hurt himself already."

Caroline saw the new wood of the crutches through the plane window as Steve struggled with them. He was laughing with Trevor.

"What happened?" Caroline said. Trevor had been piloting the plane. He'd worked for them the summer before.

"It's nothing," Steve said. "A sprain. I twisted it jogging." He situated the rubber tips of the crutches on a boulder and boosted himself out of the plane.

"No more o' your salty jokes now," Trevor said. "Missus, your good man had to stay in Vancouver." He squatted in the plane and handed Caroline a liter of rye and a black mesh bag of clean towels. "The provincial office—the licensing office—they wanted him to sign some papers an' the papers weren't ready. He asked me to bring these gentlemen up here and fish with them. A nasty job, for sure," he laughed, "but someone has to do it."

"Welcome, Trevor," Caroline said. "Joe. Steve. Welcome to Silverthorne." She nestled the rye and towels in among the boulders.

"This is Caroline," Trevor said, shoving their tweedy Geoffrey Beane luggage toward her. "She's the best cook west of the Fraser River." He winked at her and when he did the wrinkles around his eye made her think of a child's pinwheel. "Steve here—from the sound of it—is the best cook in Chicago."

"That's quite a claim to fame," Caroline said, settling the wide strap of the carry-on over her shoulder.

"This is a paradise," Joe said. He surveyed the camp, the river, his beefy hands on his wide hips, as though he owned the place, and indeed he does, Caroline thought, he's bought us for the week.

"Help, Mom?"

All eyes turned to Birch on the bank. She wore high-topped Converse sneakers and a long T-shirt over her bathing suit. The T-shirt was printed with the words: *The Four Stages of Tequila: you're good-looking, you're rich, you're bullet-proof, you're invisible.*

"Yes, of course," Caroline said. "Pick up some of these bags and take them to the guest cabin. To the porch."

Trevor sat back on his haunches and took off his baseball cap and wiped the top of his bald head. "Growing like a weed, ain't she, missus?"

"That's the way with children, Trevor."

"She's a beauty," Joe said, after Birch was out of earshot.

"Like mother, like daughter," Trevor said. He hung two pair of hipwaders over the wing trusses.

Steve hobbled further down the riverbank and gestured with one crutch to an ouzel. His wrapped ankle worried Caroline a little. His father had laid his rod cases against a log, hitched up his khakis, and followed him, with the self-consciousness city people have their first days in the bush.

Trevor handed her a small cooler which she knew contained her fresh vegetables, and just as the weight of the cooler shifted from his hands to her arms, he said, "Will said to tell you 'no hard feelings,' dearie."

"Look," Steve shouted. "Bald eagles."

"This one's more of a birder than an angler," Trevor said. "Wait'll you show him the heron."

"Is the dearie from him or you?" Caroline said, smiling, and she turned, loaded down, and followed Birch to the cabins.

Trevor had brought the Sunday *Vancouver Sun* and a *Rolling Stone*. Birch lay on her stomach on the braided rug in the main cabin, plundering the fashion ads in the newspaper. The dining table was set, candles lit. The generator battled with their peace of mind and Joe and Steve sipped rye on the red leather sofa. Trevor and Caroline scuttled about the kitchen, which was separated from the dining area by a long island. The island served as cutting board, bar, lunch counter, bookcase. Caroline's cookbooks were stacked helter-skelter, clippings and notecards straggling in among the pages. Three brass lamps hung along the kitchen wall, their shine waxing and waning with the generator's clatter. It was eight o'clock and still light outside.

"Did Will say when we might expect him back?" Caroline said. She was cutting dark pink chunks of smoked salmon.

Trevor tore open a packet of stoned wheat crackers and dumped them into a bread basket. "He said he'd try to catch a ride up day after tomorry. With the Dean River crew."

"Where's he staying?"

"With his sister in Kitsilano."

"You go on out and have a drink with them, Trevor. I'll finish up in here."

She watched them from the kitchen, she listened. Steve was brushing dust from the inside of his camera. Joe was the hearty one, a back slapper, a salesman. He owned an antique shop and Steve had a bakery above the antique shop. They'd lived in Chicago all their lives, on the thirtieth and forty-fourth floors of the same high-rise. They'd been on the Bow in Alberta last year. "Next year New Zealand," Joe said, raising his drink in toast. "The Tongariro." "Be here now," Steve said. Caroline couldn't believe he said that. "I just like to get my ducks in a row," Joe said.

They were an odd pair, Joe, the cagey collector of Chippendale frames and trestle tables, Steve, the young Dead Head who'd turned his health habits into a business. He talked about whole grains and fiber and Jerry Garcia. He put Caroline in mind of a satyr, with his round bottom and short legs, his corona of curly blond hair.

"How's the ankle, lad?" Trevor said.

"I'm not feeling any pain. After this."

"Do you think this'd look good on me?" Birch asked.

Trevor leaned over her newspaper and said, "You'd look fine in anything, Birch. Say, why don't you come fishing with us tomorrow? Like you used to do, you know."

Birch curled upright in one fluid motion, drawing in her dignity, her arms around her calves. "I don't go out anymore, Trevor."

She had on pale jeans, torn in white shreds at the knees and across one thigh. There was something about her fleshy brown knees that made Caroline think of breasts exposed and she supposed that was the idea, to expose herself, in some acceptable manner.

"Don't you get lonely for kids your own age?" Steve said.

"My parents prefer to have me here," Birch said.

"That doesn't answer my question, silly goose. You play backgammon?"

"Sometimes," Birch said.

"Poker's my game tonight," Joe said. "You'll make a fourth, won't you, Caroline?"

"What're we betting? Pasta?"

"Pennies, just pennies," Trevor said.

Birch came over to her mother, behind the island, and slipped the shoulder of her T-shirt down and said, "Am I tanning or burning?"

Caroline cut her eyes across to the men, slicing into them, to see what they were seeing. Only Steve had paid attention to Birch's question.

"Trevor tells me," Joe said, "you've had a bit of a bear problem this year, Caroline."

She put her arms around Birch and kissed her cheek, the way she might have when she was little. They were the same size now. "We haven't seen her in a few weeks, actually."

"This far north they're afraid of us," Trevor said.

"My father has a bear gun," Birch said. "I've never been afraid of bears." She pushed away from Caroline. "I'm famished. Really famished. When do we eat?"

The winey smell of the olive oil, the garlic, swelled Caroline's appetite, too. "Help me, sweetie," she said to Birch. And she kept her there behind the island, among the ovens and clay bowls, safe in an old ritual.

"Two sunny days in a row. Can we stand it?"

"Someone's asleep at the wheel," Caroline said.

"I read that sunshine makes you, uh, horny," Birch said.

"I don't think we have to worry," Caroline said, "up here in the rain forest."

Birch arranged a sleeping bag, unzipped and inside up, on her flat sunning boulder, as though she were the hostess. Caroline set her waterlogged Keds side by side and slipped out of her flannel shirt. She wore her old two-piece: a worn bikini, once-white, now yellowing, without much stretch left. Birch's snappy suit was printed with flamingos and watermelon slices. She could have been a model. Her skin had a luminous quality to it.

Caroline tried to remember if her own skin had ever looked like that. When she was fourteen, sun-bathing was not something girls did. Caroline had grown up in Baltimore, in a flat over a bridal shop on Eastern Avenue. Her most prized activity had been riding the city bus up York Road to The Senator and basking in its dark art deco splendor to see Kim Novak, Elizabeth Taylor, Natalie Wood. Afterward, she'd read her yellowing copies of *Photoplay*. She'd counted herself lucky if her skin had broken out only on her forehead where she could hide it with her bangs. Hiding had been a way of life: acne, tampons, your period, hickeys, other girls' secrets, phone calls, your feelings.

"What's he doing down there?" Birch said. She meant Steve.

"Splashing around in the Kikkboat. I think the cold water's good for his ankle."

Trevor and Joe had left early in the morning, after a breakfast of Finnish bread and fruit. They'd taken *Tupelo Honey*, all the gear the boat would hold, a lunch, and two six-packs of Moosehead. Caroline didn't expect them back until nearly dark. They'd filled an extra can of gas for the outboard and gone upriver. She was counting on a fresh catch for dinner.

"Do you think he's cute?"

"Who?"

Birch wiggled her shoulders against the sleeping bag. "You know. Steve."

"He's way too old for you, kiddo." Caroline slapped away a black fly. "I *know* that. I'm just asking."

"I guess so. Let me have some of that sun-sceen."

"Sun-screen attracts bears," Steve said. "Did you know that?" He was standing on one crutch at the edge of the woods, among the thimbleberries. With one hand he picked the dusky berries and popped them into his mouth. His Patagonia shorts were the lavender of sunsets, a phenomena Caroline missed—in the mountains you never get the bright sunsets. "They're especially fond of good-looking women, dipped in sunscreen, french-fried."

Birch giggled.

"We stand forewarned," Caroline said. "How'd you like the Kikkboat?"

"It was more fun than reading ten-year-old *National Geographics*. But I'm getting bored. I'm not healing fast enough."

"It's a shame," Caroline said. She tried to ignore the fillip of arousal she felt lying before him.

"D'you ever make croissants?"

"I don't believe I ever have."

"Would you like to? I feel like baking something."

Caroline came up on her elbows and smiled at him and put on her sunglasses. "What a fine idea. Will loves them. He'll be back tomorrow."

"Those are mergansers," Steve said, pointing to the ducks splattering in an eddy. "Not the prettiest duck in the world."

"Have you ever seen a harlequin?" Birch said, excited.

"Those're beautiful, aren't they?" Steve said. "And wood ducks. Ducks are pretty amazing."

Birch flopped over on her stomach to face him. "I love birds. For their colors alone. There's so much variety."

Caroline thought, since when?

Steve stumped into the dining room, his Walkman dangling from one hand, music dribbling from the headphones. He sat on a stool at the counter across from Caroline. She was creaming butter for the chocolate prune cake. It was late afternoon and Birch was showering in the bathhouse next to the kitchen. Caroline had started a good fire in the Monarch to bake the cake and that meant the hot water jacket which fed the shower was blistering. All systems are go, Caroline thought. Food, fire, showers. It had taken them a long time—years—to make Silverthorne function smoothly.

"Listen to this," Steve said. He held one headphone to her ear, reaching across the counter. His T-shirt was dark under the arms with sweat and Caroline had the unnerving urge to smell him there, the way a kitten might burrow in an underarm.

"Alberta Hunter," Caroline said.

"I'll be *down* to get you in a taxi, honey." Steve sang along.

"Please be ready 'bout half past eight," Caroline answered.

He turned up the volume on the Walkman, but all they could hear was a staticky bass.

"We need a Walkman built for Siamese twins," he said, snapping his fingers.

She creamed the butter with gusto. "I want to be there when the band starts playing."

"I saw her in person," Steve said. "Last year. What a woman."

"You have a nice life, don't you? The best of both worlds."

"I can't complain. I kid you not—I can't complain."

"You ever hear of the Fabulous Thunderbirds?" Birch said. She stood outside the screen door, a dewy newborn adolescent swaddled in Caroline's long pink terrycloth robe.

"Stop, stop," Caroline said, clutching her midriff. "I'm media-starved."

Steve said, "You should come to Chicago for a little R and R." The hoopla of his smile seemed like confetti in the kitchen.

After their fine dinner of fish steaks and baked potatoes and stuffed artichoke hearts, after the story of the day's outing—the stately moose spied working his way up a tender green draw of alder, the catch, the

party on horseback setting up camp just a few kilometers upstream—after the dishes and the sweeping, after the generator was turned off and the low lamps lit, after Birch settled herself at the table to write her best friend Cheryl, inviting her up to the camp for a week, after Trevor and Joe opened the backgammon board, Caroline and Steve wandered out to the porch steps and sat down with their brandies. The moon was still behind the mountain and its indirect light was woolly across the clouds moving in. The river swooshed along and Steve strained to recognize the siffle of some birds near the porch. Sea weather seemed to be insinuating its way up the fjord, up the valley.

They were dressed warmly, Caroline in her culottes and a heavy wool sweater, Steve in a pale blue pile jacket. He fairly glowed in the night, resting his back against the rough-hewn porch pillar, his drink between his knees. She thought of auras. She thought of drubbing his curly hair with her knuckles and she wondered at its springiness, like a brand new carpet. She was afraid her thoughts were visible, a tattoo on her forehead.

He was talking about his mother, who was visiting a weight-loss spa in Colorado. She did it every year and every year she lost the same ten pounds. He groaned. His groan had a laugh inside it, at its core, like the center of a hard candy or a french kiss.

"Catch-and-release," Trevor said, inside the cabin. "That's the best approach with fish *and* women."

"Women can think that way, too," Birch warned him.

"You come fishing with us and show us," Joe said.

"I just might. I just might."

The night was lush around them, moist with the weather change, the trees bending like caftan-dressed nymphs, small creatures rustling in among the bracken fern, the huckleberries.

"You and I, Caroline—"

Whatever was he going to say? How could he possibly see through her, into her, already? *Caroline. Caroline.* She'd forgotten how it felt to hear her name from the mouth of a new man.

"We're people who always want to sit in the middle. Greedy."

"Doesn't everyone want attention?"

"No. *No, no, no.* Dad, for example—let's take an example at hand—he was furious when we threw a surprise party for his birthday. We had those black balloons. A three-tier carrot cake. He hated it."

"Come to think of it, Will's that way, too."

"The same people work too hard. They work at play. At everything."

"Serious."

"I saw you in the kitchen—humming, shuffling to your own hums. Soliciting attention from that old goat Trevor."

"That's the way Trevor and I *are*."

"Playful. I like that."

Birch came to the screen door, her fuzz of full hair wiry in the lamplight behind her. She seemed tall and imposing.

"Steve," she said. "Are you going out tomorrow?"

"I think I might," he said.

"Me, too."

Caroline's legs firmed over with goosebumps. A wind blew up the river. The moon was rising, like a sliced turnip over Mt. Nusatsum. "I'll keep the home fires burning," she said.

The next morning there was a drizzle, fine north coast mist. The cloud ceiling looked as though you could reach up and touch its baffles. Steve's ankle was swollen again and painful. He decided to remain in camp and after his third cup of coffee, he returned to his cabin. Birch went out with Trevor and Joe. Caroline lingered in the kitchen, leafing through her cookbooks, which was one of her escapes, a path to daydreaming she could justify. She looked up the recipe for croissants and saw that the weather was not right. She did not think that the Dean River crew would be able to fly in today. She drank jasmine tea and tried not to think about how glad she was that Will would not be able to fly in. She tried not to think about anything. She felt at the mercy of her feelings. Shame and desire vied for power in her heart, a two-headed female beast she'd known since she was twelve.

She heated a pan of water and went out to the back porch. The floor slanted and broken rods and old orange kapok lifejackets were strewn across one end of the porch. Beyond, the gentle rain saturated the bush, the woods. There was a silvery light over the fir duff in the yard. Nearby, birds made tiny squeaks in their nest.

She shaved her legs with Will's razor, in long silky strokes through lime-scented shaving cream. Then she braided her hair at the crazed mirror hanging beside the back door. She'd bathed the night before and shaving her legs had been an afterthought. She pinched her cheeks, settled a sou'wester on her head, pulled on black rubber farm boots and a slicker. The clean towels in a plastic grocery bag were her excuse.

"I thought you'd never come," Steve said. He had a fire going in the little airtight stove.

"Here're your clean towels." She laid the bag on the armchair.

"Have you ever seen sandhill cranes around here?" He was lying on the bed—in khakis and a longjohn shirt—looking at a red field guide. There was one lamp lit, its globe all sooty.

"What do they look like?"

"Look here," he said, and he rolled over on his side and flattened the field guide open on the edge of the bed.

Caroline sat down beside him and resisted the temptation to reach out and touch him. His temple was damp and pink. She flung her sou'wester on the floor.

"They're the ones with the red caps."

She leaned over the book. His field glasses were lying on the nightstand, and a pocketwatch, and a pipe and a pouch of Captain Black tobacco,

and a book of matches from Thai Town on North Clark. She hadn't known that he smoked. She realized there were many things about him she didn't know.

He kissed her. "Mm," he said, "Car-o-line."

"Oh, my," Caroline said.

They let themselves look at last into one another's eyes. They kissed again, his fingers on her jaw. After that, her slicker and boots disappeared and he put another log on the fire. They lay on the bed for a long time, talking, talking, in one another's arms, their attraction like a membrane between them. When at last he undressed her, he said, "How do you keep your skin so soft?" And she said, "Bear grease." They made love with the rain sealing them away in the cabin. He was a noisy lover. Once she said, "How old're you, anyway?" He said, "Twenty-four," and she thought, fresh off the assembly line. She felt new under his hands. He had a way of kissing which made her think of spelunking.

She left him sitting on the edge of the bed, tamping Captain Black into the bowl of his pipe. His penis reminded her of lilacs in the rain, tumescent but limp. She had to pee and she put on her T-shirt and ran into the rain, barefooted, into the pistachio light of the downpour. They had a rule that everyone had to use the outhouse, but she'd broken so many rules already today. She squatted beside the cabin next to a rusty outboard propeller. The rain soaked through her shirt and she turned her face up to the rain and laughed out loud.

"Caroline. What—are—you—doing?" Birch said, her fists balled at her side, stiff-armed. She stood about ten meters from Caroline in her Converse sneakers and a long black slicker, her hair dripping and dark and wet against her head.

Caroline said, "There's a bear behind you. Come here." She stood up, the rusty propeller in one hand, and opened one arm to Birch.

"It's just a stupid black bear," Birch said, stalking over to the porch steps near Caroline. "He's been following me." She allowed Caroline to hug her, to push her toward the porch steps. "He didn't even have the good sense to get out of the brush. I was on the trail."

The bear lumbered around the edge of the woods, like a drunken pup. His coat was dirty and streaked with mud, his dumb eyes struggled to see.

Steve came to the door in his lavender shorts. "What's all the commotion?"

Birch looked him up and down, coolly assessing him. "It's just a black bear."

Caroline heaved the propeller toward the bear. "Get out. Get out of here." She was quite aware that her T-shirt just barely covered her bottom.

"Vamoose," Steve yelled.

"Andale, andale," Birch sang out. She giggled.

The three of them curled their toes over the edge of the porch and yelled at the bear. The bear kinked his neck up once as if to complain about the rain, and then he moved clumsily away into the bush, trampling

huckleberries as he went. Steve went back inside and left them there on the porch together.

"You're a very brave girl," Caroline said, "to keep walking with that bear nearby."

"I'm not afraid," Birch said. "I get that from you."

Caroline hugged her close. They were both wet and cold.

"From me?"

"Who else?" She surveyed the sky. "Dad won't be able to fly in today."

"I think that's safe to say," Caroline whispered. It was late afternoon and the rain would be driving Trevor and Joe back home soon. She thought they would like to have brandy and chocolate prune cake and a warm fire. The evening stretched ahead, delicious and sure, an evening of her own making. She tried not to think of how unfamiliar Will's face would look to her when he returned, of how it would feel to be captive again in his sheltering embrace.

"That bear high-tailed it out of here," Birch said. She shivered.

Caroline posed like a body-builder and said, "Want to feel my muscle?"

Birch laughed and squeezed her bicep.

Patricia Henley

Names

Dawn. The horizon
opens its eyelids a crack
and begins to see. What? Names.
They are on the filmy surface

of things. The rose
is still called
a rose today, and the memory
of its passage, haste.

Hurry to live more!
May that unripe strength of the Instant
elevate us to long love,
so agile

that upon arriving at its goal
it hurries to assert itself: Afterwards!
Alert, alert, alert!
I will be, I will be!

And the roses? Eyelids
closed: final
horizon. Perchance nothing?
But the names remain.

Jorge Guillen

Translated by Stan Rose

Secret

Poetry is ineffable.
Leave it twisted in its corner.
Don't love.

I hear there's shooting
within our range.
Is it the revolution? Love?
Say nothing.

Everything is possible; I'm not.
The sea overflows with fish.
There are men who walk on the sea
as though they were walking on the street.
Don't tell it.

Suppose an angel of fire
swept the face of the earth
and the sacrificed
were begging for mercy.
Don't beg.

Carlos Drummond de Andrade

Translated by Stan Rose

Untitled

I missed the bus and lost hope.
I return home pale.
The street is useless and no car
would crush my body.

I'll climb the sluggish slope
where the roads are confused.
All of them lead to the origin
of the drama and flora.

I don't know if I'm suffering
or if it's that someone is having a good time
(why not?) in the scanty night
with an insoluble piccolo.
Meanwhile for a long time
we have been: yes! to the eternal.

Carlos Drummond de Andrade

Translated by Stan Rose

8 Years Ago

she had me dead on my feet
the grenade no more than a yard away
in those little hands
laughing she threw it
at my feet

 I leaped back
falling into her closet
the urine running down my legs
& she said, "Do it again, Daddy"

do it again

Daddy

Bill Shields

ECHOES

What kind of crows,
grey and black, fussy
like jays, flop
on the tree branches?

"What kind of
love is this" flops
flat nightly, sleeps
away the days?

What kind of place
is this? What's out there
in these wet unfamiliar
streets and flattened,

stretched faces?
Who's been left here,
what's been wasted
again.

Robert Creeley

Bush's Story

Been here 22 years
never had no trouble.
Do my job and go home
if they leave me alone.
When a foreman messes
in my shit I get hot—
especially some punk like Cavett.
That little prick never got dirty
never touched a machine.
Just pointed. Reminded me
of one of those pretty boys
does the tv news.

I didn't want to hurt him.
Just wanted to scare him—
back his ass against a wall, get him
a little greasy. Make him feel
the hot air blowing out the hi-lo.

You shoulda seen his face.
I just couldn't stop.

Jim Daniels

Looking for Home

The place where I was born no longer exists.
The town where I grew up
Spat out its teeth.

I call my shoes home,
And take my place beside the missing man
Who waits for his lost family
To catch up

Down in the coal mine
The bones of my grandfather crawl through the rock.
My dead grandmother
Kneels in mud at the bottom of the flooded field.

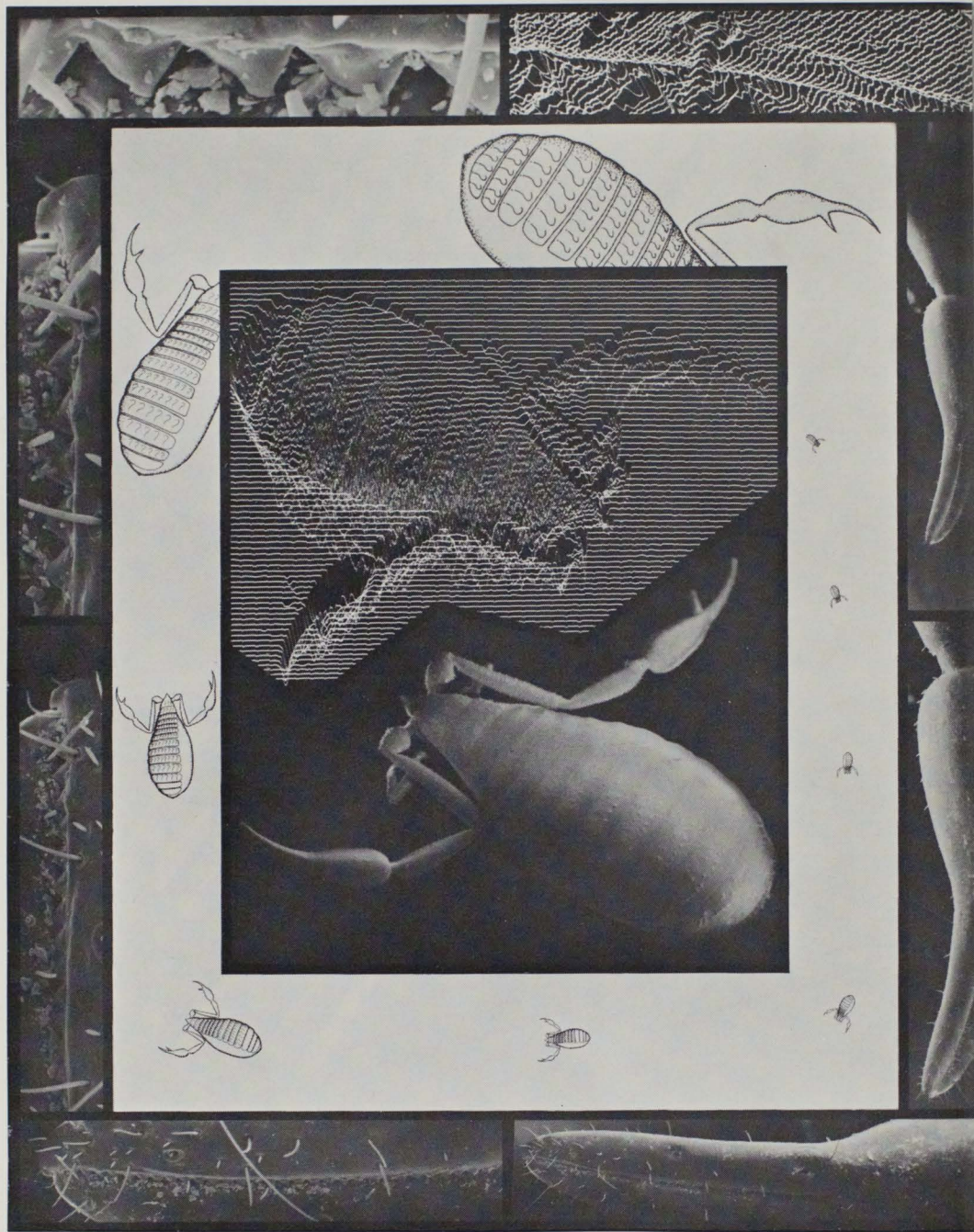
In a moment I will forget
every name I ever knew.

I will call to you with a gesture of my two hands,
Asking you to guide me
To the place
Where every place has gone

Elizabeth Gordon



Transition #2: DeWayne Williams, 1985



A Question of Scales: DeWayne Williams, 1986



Transition #1: DeWayne Williams, 1985



Nationalism: DeWayne Williams, 1978

In Less Than A Breath

I toss down another cup of coffee and push my chair back from the table. I want to stand, but I force myself to sit. My hands are shaking and my stomach is tight. "Never drink coffee before a meet," Jerry Schneider, my coach, has told me time and again. This is my fifth cup, and I may have another. I wish I would vomit, show some tangible sign of illness, but instead, I am so charged now that I can barely remain in my chair.

The North Face chalet is deserted. A half hour from now, the officials will close the ski jump and the coaches and the competitors will come in for some "carbs"—twinkies, or candy bars, anything for that last boost.

The high school kids will struggle and fight through the line first, the hoch team will follow, and then will come the veterans and the coaches in their Sorrels and tube-top parkas. I am on the hoch team, the high team. I wear the Minneapolis Ski Club's red and white jumpsuit, and ski on the club's best equipment, though I haven't done so for long.

Until regionals last year, Kip Sorenson had the club's top spot. Kip used to be a hockey player and jumped like that, crazy and violent. On the thirty and forty meter hills no one could come close to Kip for sheer distance, and he knew it.

Kip jackknifed, bent at the waist over his skis, almost imperceptibly at first. When we moved to the Bush Lake sixty, and I began to match Kip's distance scores, he pushed harder, and jackknifed worse. Jerry told me Kip would lose his distance advantage on the big jumps, the seventy and ninety meter.

And he did. I finally beat him at Chester, a jump in Duluth. He shook my hand after his last run, a big, lopsided grin on his face, and after that night we tied every other meet, Kip hurling himself always further, while I held back, forcing my shoulders to curve over my skis and my arms to lie flat at my sides.

It went like that until early this month, when I got in two good runs at our central-division tournament, and Kip was late on his second, nearly digging a hole in the crest of the hill with his skis. I picked up my trophy, an ugly gold-plated thing, then drove toward highway twelve on Wirth Boulevard feeling elated. At home I got a phone call from Jerry. The national team in Vermont wanted to see what I could do at Ironwood, Michigan, where a one-hundred-twenty meter jump had been built on Copper Peak.

"Don't get too excited," he said.

"Why do you say that?"

Jerry cleared his throat.

"Why did you—"

"I told them we'd think about it."

"What do you mean, 'think about it?'"

"Maybe by the end of this year. . . . Look, it's not like I said you don't have—"

"What did they think of Sorenson?"

"Maybe," he said. "Maybe."

Jerry wanted me to wait—and even moreso Kip—but we packed our van and went to Michigan anyway. The whole trip was a fiasco. On the highway heavy snow swirled around us like dense fog. Jerry pressed his face to the windshield, cursing in a low, guttural German. Kip sat beside him, cracking his knuckles, and I watched the yellow signs flash by from the back seat.

The first morning at Copper Peak we sidestepped to the top of the landing hill, the knoll, and back down, flattening the wind crust that had formed during the night. Then a jumper set the track, and the first man after him hooked over his skis and had to pull hard to keep his tips from dropping.

"It's damned fast," Jerry said, standing on the flats. He shook his head. "You see that, Vogel? The whole track up there is black ice."

I said I'd noticed it.

Kip pushed his cap back and squinted into the sun. "Could slow down a bit, don't you think?" he said. He cocked his head sideways, then grinned, his eyes puckering under his brows, his lips twisting in the corners. I'd seen him grin like that coming back from a jump in Duluth once. Battle Creek it was called. We were tanked up on mad dog after a meet, howling down a back street of some nowhere town in Kip's '53 Biscayne, our wet wool suits stinking and the radio blaring Kip's favorite tune, Crocodile Rock. We passed a truck on a narrow bridge and Kip just railed right through, scraping our fender on the truck's bumper.

I turned around to see the driver of the truck stop in the middle of the road. He jumped out of the cab and shook his fist over his head and Kip turned to me and smiled that joker's smile.

"Good as, right?"

Right. Good as a mile. I watch the waitress fill the cocoa dispenser behind the counter, then turn back to my coffee cup and poke at the brown grains in the bottom. I don't know what I'll say to Jerry and my teammate, Paul Halvorsen, when they come in, what excuse I'll use.

"Would you like a warm-up?"

I'm surprised and jerk back in my chair. The waitress has her arm poised above my cup. She pours, my cup warms, then burns my hand.

"Nice night for a meet, isn't it?" she says.

I nod and turn away from her, face the newly spackled wall where my skis hang from a rack. Tonight they look like torpedoes, or bombs, or long blue bullets.

Since the accident, I've gone over them a dozen times, adjusting the heel blocks and cables. They said Kip should have come out of his bindings

when he fell. But Jerry and I were watching from the bottom, and we could see that his staying in the bindings didn't have much to do with anything.

I rock back in my chair, anxious still, only this time I stand, then walk to the stairs and outside, my hands crammed into my pockets. Along the path to the jump the snow stands waist high, and a cold breeze rustles the dry and brittle leaves in the oaks. Flood lights from the hill cast hard-edged shadows across the path, and I can smell the kerosene heaters in the judges' box.

From there the coaches shout at jumpers in mid-flight.

"HANDS BACK!"

A jumper in a red suit darts by the judges' box and over the knoll. I check my step, listening. There is a hard, distant slap, plastic on ice, then the jumper spits out onto the flats.

The path widens and I climb to the crest of the hill. At the top of the scaffolding another jumper waits. Jerry yells from the judges' box, "LET'S SEE YOU HIT IT RIGHT THIS TIME, HALVORSEN!"

Halvorsen, high and tiny on the platform, waves for an all clear, gets it from the judges' box, then slams a ski against the backboards and rattles down the in-run.

His chest is too high, his legs too stiff.

"GET OFF YOUR HEELS!" Jerry yells.

Paul rocks forward, his ski tips pass the pine boughs, and late, he lunges out, "UNH!" jackknifing so badly he's got to pull his legs up under him, so his skis don't nose into the hill. Then he drops out of sight, and there is that slapping of skis on ice. On the flats he turns to a stop, a rainbow plume jetting behind him. I clamber down the icy steps alongside the landing hill, hugging the rail, then wait at the bottom.

Out by the snow fencing that separates the flats from the river, Halvorsen shoulders his skis, then strides toward me and the stairs.

"How's it going?" I yell.

He shrugs his shoulders, but at the stairs, kicks the bottom step. "You saw it."

"You're looking better."

"Right," he says. Facing the landing hill, he talks through the side of his mouth. "Anyway . . . I thought Jerry was gonna get another toe-piece for your binding?"

There's no meanness in Paul, but he's always direct.

I nod.

Paul tugs at the strap on his helmet and glances in my direction, not quite meeting my eyes; then, he mounts the stairs, his skis swaying on his shoulder.

Before the accident in Michigan, it was Sorenson, Halvorsen, and me. Teammates, all through high school. Every autumn Jerry had us run the lakes in town, and when the snow fell, we'd side-step the landing hills

at Wirth, Carver Park, and Bush Lake, our legs shaking and lungs heaving. Then we'd ski down, practicing telemark landings, getting back the feel of our skis.

Our meets started in late December, with the local competitions, and ended the first week of March, with the regionals. We'd drive out to Wirth or Bush or Carver five days a week those months, jostling each other, laughing, Kip singing Olivia Newton John songs I hated.

He did things you weren't supposed to do, and he got us doing them too. When Jerry drove the van onto the service road at Bush Lake, Kip ran behind and got a hold on the bumper, hooky-bobbing on his feet until Jerry stopped to chew him out. While Kip was getting a talking to we'd all scramble around the back and find a good place to hang on. Sometimes Kip would buy cough syrup, the codeine stuff, and we'd all get stoned and go jumping.

He crashed a lot, but he got better.

At a new hill, Kip was always the first to take a run. Each hill was a surprise, each had some special characteristic: there was a drop-off in Eau Claire's out-run, one that tossed you on your heels in the transition; at Bush Lake, a hook in the scaffolding threw you off to the right side of the landing hill, near a stand of trees; and at Chester, a perpetual wind crossed the knoll, threatening to turn you on your side, mid-air, if you weren't careful.

Sometimes I told Kip he was an idiot.

On bitter-cold weekends he'd call me.

"Let's go," he'd say.

"It's ten fucking degrees below zero, Kip."

"So what?" he'd say, and I could just see his face.

Before kicking off the platform he'd catch your eye and nod, just once, as though he were tipping his hat. Then he'd slam off the platform, his arms held tightly in front of him, as though he were preparing to throw a punch. Gaining speed, he shifted from side to side, rocked on his squat legs to the bottom, then hurled himself off the jump and into the dark.

Like cutting glass, I'd hiss down the in-run after him, riding smooth over my skis, my body compressed and elastic. Toward the bottom I'd roll to the balls of my feet, and a hand's width before my ski tips crossed the pine boughs, I levered myself up and over the knoll. The hill dropped away then, and a great Ohhhhhh! hummed in my chest.

It happened so fast you had to get more of it—it was like a flavor, one you couldn't quite identify.

Tournament nights, on the platform, you could smell hot paraffin from the jumpers waxing their skis; flood lights telescoped the length of the in-run like brilliant bluish pearls, and there was an utter stillness before each jumper's run. Down the scaffolding shadows spun about each jumper like hands on a clock, and from the landing hill, Jerry would yell, "HIYA! HIYA! HIYA!," dancing in his Sorrels. Sometimes my folks and sisters stood

on the flats, and from the top I could almost pick them out of all the people clustered there.

After the meets we'd cruise Theodore Wirth Parkway, the windows of Kip's car open wide, Kip singing, our skis on the roof rack jutting over the windshield, where everybody could see them.

Jerry is yelling again, his voice harsh, demanding. Halvorsen launches himself from the scaffolding, falling a good distance, his skis nearly perpendicular to the landing hill; he slaps down on the out-run and squirts through the transition, his hands braced on the snow behind him, another zero-style-point landing.

Out of the corner of my eye I can see Jerry is watching me. He leans out of the judge's box, his gloved hands clasped in front of him. I turn back toward the chalet, scuffing through the snow on the path. A low oak branch snags my jacket and I tear loose from it. When I reach the back door, I jerk it open, pulling the return spring free with a snap. Behind the counter the waitress bustles, arranging candy bars and cakes on a long plastic tray.

The fluorescent lights inside glow blue and fuzzy, the walls press inward, and the air is stuffy and hot. I knock a chair back from the table nearest the door and sit, gripping the table top.

I feel like I'm falling through my seat, just tumbling end over end, like Kip in Michigan.

They said it was the sun, the sun had softened up the landing hill, making the snow a bit sticky there.

It was a headwind, pulled him off balance.

It was the fault of the bindings, their not releasing when he fell.

A ways past the five-hundred-foot marker, he met the landing hill in a telemark, smiling, his fist raised. But in the transition he was jerked backwards, his head striking first. A patch of blue ice.

And on the way out to Wirth this afternoon, in the van, while Jerry and Halvorsen argued about waxes, I unscrewed one of my toe-clips with my car keys and pocketed it. When we got to the hill, I noticed it was missing.

"You lost a toe-clip?" Jerry said.

I pressed the ski toward him, fumbling for something to say; his eyes went somewhere, far away from me, then he climbed the hill to the judge's box. Watching his square, thick shouldered back move up the hill, I got a sensation of shrinking into myself.

That last morning, Jerry had argued with the national team coach, just yards from us on the flats.

"It's not a good time," Jerry said.

"Well, when will be a good time?"

"This afternoon it might warm up. The track's pretty fast."

"I think you should send them down. Tell them to give it a sled-ride the first few runs."

"I'd like to think they could do that," Jerry said.

"Hell, my twelve-year-old boy's skied down the landing hill."

"Maybe I'll have them do that," Jerry said, his voice poking out the words.

Kip and I stood with our backs to them, looking at the jump. the landing hill alone had to be over seven hundred feet long, most of it a good fifty-per-cent grade or better, and above it, the scaffolding stretched to a tiny red point.

"What do you think?" I said to Kip.

Kip swung from side to side, from one foot to the other.

I breathed deep, the cold air sharp in my chest. "Don't go if you're not ready, Kip," I said.

He turned to look at me, frowning, his eyes puckered.

Five jumpers in electric-blue suits stopped midway up the landing hill to pummel down a high spot. They moved in formation, raising and lowering their skis as though they were no heavier than shoes. The bottom man slapped the tail of his ski down and a hand sized chunk of snow broke loose. It gained speed, then leaped high into the air and came down again and again, breaking into smaller pieces, all of them careening their way to the flats. The bottom man pointed, then spread his arms wide.

A second later the jumpers' laughter floated down to us.

"Assholes," Kip said. He balanced on the balls of his feet, his steel toe-pieces snapping through the hardpacked snow.

"Looks like quite a ride," I said.

Kip jerked his head in the direction of the landing hill. "They don't seem too impressed."

"No," I said.

"A few runs and we'll be right up there with those guys, what do you say?"

"It's big."

"Sure it's big."

I looked at him askance and he stared back.

"I can do it," he said.

Jerry stepped away from the other coach, and Kip glanced over at him, then turned back to me.

"Remember that first time you went off Chester?" he said.

I pulled my hat back, watching Jerry, who was nudging the snow with his boots. "Yeah, I remember."

"Jerry said you looked like you were screaming all the way down."

I shook my head. We hadn't jumped Chester in two years, not since that night I beat Kip there. I liked Chester, but it was too small now.

"This isn't Chester, Kip," I said. "If you miss here, you're gonna fall a long way."

Kip blew a puff of air out his mouth. "Don't gimme that crap, Alex. I beat you a long time at Chester before any of this happened."

"Things change, Kip," I said.

Jerry came up behind us, and Kip turned sharply to him.

"You all set?" Jerry said.

The terrace door slams, and boots rumble across the ceiling toward the stairway. The Bernard fills with the jumpers and coaches, and the smell of hot coffee warms the frigid air rushing in from outside.

Jerry sits with the coach from the St. Paul Ski Club, and Paul Halvorsen, poised between Jerry's table and mine, a Hostess fruit pie in his hand, turns in my direction.

"Got in some nice runs," he says.

I pick at my fingernails and shift in my chair. Around us the coaches and jumpers laugh, their voices thick with false bravery, and I feel a pressure in my arms, a desire to fling my coffee cup against the wall where my skis hang from the rack.

Halvorsen takes a bite of his pie, and, shifting the filling to one side of his mouth, says, "You oughta take a run before the meet. The track's real smooth." He swallows and takes another bite.

"Maybe I will," I say. I crush Paul's pie wrapper into a little ball and flick it off the edge of the table.

Paul clears his throat, then mumbles something through a mouthful of pie. I lean forward, and he says, "Shit. . . ." He smiles, then holds out the pie. "See this?"

I look into the glossy cherry filling, wondering what Paul wants me to see, and before I can pull my head back he shoves the pie into my nose.

"Very funny, Paul."

He laughs so hard his eyes glaze up.

"I don't think that's funny," I say.

"Christ, don't take everything so damn serious."

I hold my hands against my thighs and raise my head. "You weren't there."

"Right. And you aren't going to let me forget it, either, are you?"

I push the table away and stand, then walk easy to the stairs. I pull my skis from the rack on the wall and heft them onto my shoulder. They weigh nothing. I know I should leave, now, before this thing in me is too big, but I am held back. At the table, Paul is perched on the back of his chair. Jerry is watching, too, a cup of coffee in his hand.

"Come on, Alex," Paul says, his arms outstretched, inviting me back to the table. "Shit. . . ."

I grit my teeth, holding it in, but the words escape me like a convulsion. "What the fuck is wrong with you, Paul?"

Paul's face reddens.

"You think this is gonna make you better? Is that it? Is this the way you're gonna get better?"

Paul stares off toward the counter.

"I'm talking to you, *Paul*."

The others huddle over their tables. Jerry pushes his chair back, then stands, his face swollen.

"Fuck you," Paul says.

I feel my mouth twisting into what must be an ugly sneer. " 'Fuck you' is right!" I jab back. "If you had even half the guts—It would still take a miracle—do you hear me, Paul?—it would take a miracle, for you to even *PISS* off a jump without *FALLING ON YOUR ASS. DO YOU HEAR ME, PAUL?*"

I charge up the stairs, then slam through the back door onto the terrace. The stars are out, hard pinpricks of light above the oaks. My breathing is shallow and forced, then jerking in gasps. I tear my feet through the snow on the path to the jump and stand on the knoll, my hands clenched into fists. Nothing, but nothing, has come of this. Nothing. Just a big hole where Kip used to be. And this club, this piss-ant club, the best I'll ever know.

Down on Wirth Parkway a car horn blares. Then there is that hush.

From the knoll, all of East Minneapolis spiderwebs out in patterns of yellow and blue lights. A pale reflection of the moon hovers over the river. A northwest wind blows, cooling my cheeks. With the toe of my boot I chip through the icy crust in the center of the hill, feeling the layers, the giving way of the crystal snow, and then the ice again, unyielding.

The flood lights come on and the hill is a brilliant white ribbon set against a hillside of dark limbed oaks. A judge scrambles around me with the marking chain. " 'lo," he says. He pounds a spike into the top of the hill and stretches the chain down the landing hill. The caners shuttle by me, their poles held high. They position themselves all the way to the transition, where the flats spread into the darkness and into the river.

Halvorsen and Jerry climb the stairs from the chalet with the others. Jerry turns to me and says, "Your binding still on the blink?" He waits, long enough to shake his head, then slides down the hill to the judges' box, bumping against the embankment on the other side, Halvorsen following on his heels.

The night chill has set in, and a few latecomers take practice runs. Most of them jackknife: with their legs extended like stoppers, they crash down on the tails of their skis and ride the out-run to the bottom, hands braced against the snow behind them.

Jerry stares at me from the judges' box, looking more sad than angry now.

I pat the breast pocket of my jump suit, and feel the lump there.

Then, a jumper sets the track, and the meet begins. I hide from Jerry in the shadows under the scaffolding. Behind me, jumpers stand in line by number.

There is a ticking in the scaffolding, a rush of air, then a wooden slap! and an "Awww" rises from the flats. There must be a hundred-and-fifty people watching, from the sound of it. I know the last man has fallen, has gotten zero points for style. I wait to hear his distance P.A.'d from the judges' box.

One-hundred-and-sixty feet.

On a clean, fast night like tonight, I can break one-ninety-five on this jump. Kip could do better than two-ten.

The scaffolding rattles, again. Then again, and Halvorsen, his back to me, is on his way up.

I carry my Elans to the tool boxes on the Bernard side of the jump, and heft a piece of paraffin from the box nearest me. On my right, a jumper melts wax with a butane torch, touching up his skis. The smell puts me on top for a second, on the platform, where I can see for miles. Then there is a sensation of motion. But it fades, and I can't get it back. I turn my skis over and run my hand down the P-tex bases. Under the flood lights the bases glow a warm yellow, but are slick and cold to the touch. In sharp, even circles, I force the wax into the bases. Then I am hammering at them, whacking the bases with the paraffin block, leaving big sticky swatches of wax.

There is that smell again, that sense of motion.

I won't stay down here anymore, sick with fear and wanting. I pull the toe clip from my pocket and twist it back into the binding with a screwdriver. The screwdriver blade skips out of the toe piece, poking my hand so it bleeds. I rub snow into the cut, then pull on my gloves, and check my heel blocks and cables. I shoulder my skis, and step into line, then climb the scaffolding. From there everything looks so small, the pebble-sized upturned faces, the strip of snow through the oaks narrowing to a point.

Then I am on top with four others, swaying with the wind, pumping my skis back and forth to shake the stiffness from my legs. The sky bulges from the point where I stand. There is that smell again, and the cool wind on my face.

The jumper before me is off, and I step into the center track. It is as though I am watching myself from a faraway place.

A hundred faces are raised below me, white hollows with dark centers, and the horizon yawns wide from the end of the jump. A chainer waves the all clear.

The scaffolding groans in the breeze.

I snap my right leg back, the ski hits the backboard, and I slide out and over the edge of the platform, dropping, whoomp! onto the steep in-run. It is like my head is being pulled off, the blackness and lights and trees and faces bursting through me. And faster, everything is sharp, intense, as if packed with light, distorted with speed and height, compressed below, lengthened at my side. I shift forward, my chest riding elastic above my legs. the support beams whoosh, whoosh, whoosh by, my legs somewhere beneath me, *they know what to do*, and now the ramp curves out and the pine boughs rise up, grow larger, and the two tracks there gleam, and my skis are damp and smooth, and I roll forward, feel myself falling, and at that moment I burst off the ramp. A brilliant white flash nearly blinds me, and everything says "Stand Up!" as the knoll drops out from under me, but I lay out over my skis, and the air beneath

them buoys me up, and I push further into the horizon, head out, arms at my sides, the faces below glowing, and I fall a long, long distance, weightless, skimming on a sheet of air, and at the last possible moment, when I will be crushed on the hill if I do not land, my legs pull under me, my skis meet the hard snow in slap, and in the transition, like coming up the next rise on a roller coaster, I am pushed down, then shot onto the flats, standing now, gliding toward the river, all of it singing in me.

Wayne D. Johnson

Dreams, Garbage

When the dreams began
crowding potatoes and beans
from the counter,
you dropped them in the garbage
among banana peels slippery as foreskin,
the wet news. The garbage lid's
clamped tight as a migraine.
The house is tidy. But someone has
framed your arm in oak,
tacked it above the couch.
And your breasts, those two dachshunds,
nose against your blouse,
trying to get out, trying
to stop the cat's tongue
from licking away your ankles,
your legs disappearing like milk.

Diane Averill

Marking Time

There will be an unusual shifting of the trees,
the angles not so sharp anymore,
a sort of chaos that you knew would happen,
causing the Earth's revolutions to slow down,
every clear image to lose its focus at the edges.
The creatures will all become larger
and move into the open spaces, out into the field
or the center of the lake, rising to the surface,
humbling themselves in dejection,
their necks curved downward,
heavy in the spine,
their hindquarters drooping like clouds
or their scales being untimely shed.

Someone will try to recall a movie like this,
some scene in black and white
where the soldiers' boots are thick with mud
and the sun is obscured by the smoke coming from the hills.
Where the birds have fled to find a fresh worm
or a newly hatched insect.
Where the only singing comes from broken branches.

Everyone becomes a watcher.
The man disappearing over the hill is wearing your shoes.
You used to listen to him scold his children.
You have seen him knot his tie,
fiddle with the car on his day off.
You have known his footfalls
and can keep pace with them now in your head,
the rhythm steady like the gentle rain
you knew as a child,
the ticking of your father's watch,
the rub on the tire of your son's bicycle.

The parts of the world hold their positions
just long enough, before another gust of wind
passes its hand over the grass
or the sun touches the windows of a speeding car.
And all muscled things find their way back to shelter,
nodding to themselves,
something gone from their stomachs,
their minds, tiny or great,
filled, bulging with some new knowledge
they cannot speak of.

James Langlas

Turned Into A Bird

For Kevin

Your letter asking twenty five dollars
Slept in my pocket a week before turning
Into a red bird who shouted "Hurrah!"

In front of Gunther's Grocery. The men
And their dogs were confused, as was I.
We all began barking, the red dusk came.

When that bird became night on wings
The mountains reddened, we stopped our
Circling, dogs became birds.

If you had seen everything red as it was
When the dusk flew, if you had seen the stone
Houses and girls on porches, quiet, red as

Cut cedar along the gullies, on top of the hills,
You would have flown into a bird with me,
Now travelling, now diving.

John Whalen

Going to Sleep

She had to have been a man, at one time
or another. She must have left two bags
of laundry in an unprotected car, sometime
in the recent past, not too long ago.
The finish of her car was flat black.
She had sons instead of daughters. Imagine

how happy the father was! Sons instead of
daughters! They organized the block into
clubs. The clubs into cliques. The
cliques into claques. Crime flew out
the window like those giant cockroaches
in Guam the night we danced away the

typhoon. The night we grew wings and
flapped each other to sleep. In the
morning my fingers were sticky. The
pool was full of young officers' wives
with their kids. I dove like a man
from one end to the other in the rain

through the thick cries of little
girls wrapped in wet towels. I sloshed
through the lobby and asked for my keys.
My handwriting became legible and
baroque. We flew and flew. The
cockroaches flew with us testing the

air with their chopstick feelers.
In and out of one another until the wash
was ready to hang on the railing. Until
the crabs began to like their coconut
baths. We jumped for joy with the Japanese,
slipping gently into the ocean between

anemone and sea cucumber. Slowly, carefully
daughter then son then mother then. . . Slowly
from meal to meal, island to island, until
the air itself felt inseparable from
what it held and I clicked shut my upside
down eyes like a kewpie doll going to sleep.

In the Cards

When death comes it is in the cards, like phone booths where breasts get revealed ears get scratched newspapers opened. When death comes it is a field of stones with eight dancers in black. Handcuffed and cufflinked, death answers the phone with only three fingers. It wears a training bra and turns itself into a little fat boy rearing itself up on eight long legs, eight courtesans climbing a ladder — freckled, silent, secure. A kimono with carp. An acorn against a wall in an alley. A dark shadow along the kitchen blinds. Death sits in the gallery, 49 little pebbles dancing across a hardwood floor, waving its striped tail across a field of dots.

Morrie Warshawski

Without Benefit of Atlas

for Bill (& for Karl)

Your son awakens you.
Your son teaches
words how to dance.
Your son laughs without ceasing
at your folly, father.
Your son describes the world
without benefit of atlas.
Your son's precision
frightens the timid.
Your son rages against the dark.
Your son follows politics
with a jaded air.
Your son has begun to read.
Your son plays the pedal steel.
Your son sees the transparency
of all earthly things.
Your son has his pride.
Your son looks for signs
at every turning.
Your son shuffles the deck.
Your son embodies stillness.
Your son, irrepressible,
scandalizes his peers.
Your son embraces his small life,
and you, his father, awaken.

Rick Newby

For David S.

What others criticize you for, cultivate.

—Jean Cocteau

Imagine: a tightening in the throat,
blue books, and a mother who is dead.
This blue house, blue-roofed,
holds all remaining memory
and ten thousand beloved volumes.
The long, low automobile
sleeps under its cover
of snow tinted blue, and the fire
speaks, a steady murmuring:
voices of the dead, women
who first caressed your ear
with lovely words, magic words, words
lifted into song from the dense,
mysterious, printed page. The meal
is spread upon the table. The bottle
of dark, southern wine breathes
on an oaken sideboard, heirloom
of remembering. Lost in the warmth
of this winter's night, you feel
again familiar presences,
open a book, touch blue pages.
From the photograph on the wall,
a tender glance. In your ear,
the voices murmuring.

Rick Newby

"and a fresh sense of comfort"

For Chou, Pang-ling

Upon leave-taking, December 28, 1988

Your strangely beautiful teapots:
small indestructible vessels,
animals with antlers
made of iron, tin, steel,
serene and living creatures
blood-red in the fire,
emptied of all being—
for that brief, still moment—
when vibrant sun glows
over far hills and you pass
into night, a creature warm
as tea water
poured onto graceful leaves.

Rick Newby

For My Vita

My life has the country in it; hills
follow me; miles of grass climb
toward this traveler's eyes in the morning.
Even at night the country unfolds
whenever a splinter of quiet at a party
happens along: I fall straight
as rain into whatever is around me.

Once in prison I felt I was
too free—my cell tumbled with the earth,
all of us flung unknowing and blind.
Since then thousands of miles have sluiced
headlong as comets past my life-shield
and vanished where the rest of the world goes.
Some day I'll save it all by closing my eyes.

William Stafford

It's All Right

Someone you trusted has treated you bad.
Someone has used you to vent their ill temper.
Did you expect anything different?
Your work—better than some others'—has languished,
neglected. Or a job you tried was too hard,
and you failed. Maybe weather or bad luck
spoiled what you did. That grudge held against you
for years after you patched up, has flared,
and you've lost a friend for a time. Things
at home aren't so good; on the job your spirits
have sunk. But just when the worst bears down
you find a pretty bubble in your soup at noon,
and outside at work a bird says, "Hi!"
Slowly the sun creeps along the floor;
it is coming your way. It touches your shoe.

William Stafford

CutBank Reviews

David Long, *The Flood of '64*; The Ecco Press, 1987; \$16.95 cloth, \$8.95 paper.

Floods are harbingers of change. In their wake new channels are formed, debris is scattered, and the long process of settling down again to the business of life is forever marked by "before" and "after." *The Flood of '64*, David Long's most recent book of short stories, is aptly titled. The characters in these stories are overcome, immobilized by something within themselves or something reaching in from the landscape around them, or more often a synchronized combination of the two. To recover they must look for some new channel to appear out of the scattered debris around them. In short, they must adapt.

Whether these people inhabit a Northwestern lumber town or a smaller, tidier burg somewhere in the East, the author never minimizes them. They fill each scene with a vitality immediately evident to the reader because Long knows each of them from the inside out.

While their names are unique and appropriate to their setting and time — Patsy, Lillian, Galen, Averill — it is their life histories that we remember. Carl and Carla Prudhomme of the title story, for example, and their "brash" and restless mother who left her husband in Illinois and with her children boarded a train for Seattle, "for no better reason than that was where the Empire Builder ended up . . . a long way from Kankakee." By the time they reached the northern Rockies she was worn down by the trip and decided to step off then and there into the valley of Stillwater.

The strongest stories in this book are the ones that must have been the hardest to imagine. In "V-E Day" there is scrupulous detail of the thoughts of a Gold Star mother irritated by the mysterious visit of a girl who seems to have hardly known her son. This is a simple story, but the depths of it are sounded. In its natural pacing Mrs. Wheelis' jealousy and confusion are revealed to us until we learn, along with her, the reason for the girl's condolence call. At the close of the story their conversation is intense and has lost all superficiality. We may leave them then, satisfied that things have come full circle.

Some of these ten stories can be paired up using their general similarities. "Clearance" and "Solstice" are both about men facing a serious crisis alone. One's exorcism of his trouble is vast and complicated, involving a solo camping trip and a nightmarish mountain plane crash. The other man is trapped. He can make few moves after his wife leaves him, other than to clear their frozen water pipes and ask a few timid questions in a local bar.

"Alex's Fire" and "Great Blue" are both coming-of-age stories. "Great

Blue" is full of the kind of rich, yet precise, detailing of human experience found through all of Long's stories. The eleven year old boy Paul looks at his dying grandfather and wonders:

. . . How the sickness could be inside of him and not show. Maybe everyone else knew what to look for he thought. They acted as if they could see it, as if they felt it in the room with them, breathing and growing. Aunt Hallie came out from the kitchen and brought his glass back, filled mostly with ice, and fit it into his hand. "There now," she said. Paul saw his eyes flick from the glass up to her face, lingering just a second, then out to the rest of them fanned out before him — his family — and then saw the slow, tired-looking shake of his head.

"The Last Photograph of Lyle Pettibone" and "Oriental Limited," the novella that ends the book, are both historical pieces. Set in the first decades of the twentieth century, they are fully realized, ambitious stories, full of historical detail, but lacking none for immediacy or drawn-out characterizations, making them two of the most memorable pieces in the book.

Both of the main characters are somehow set apart from their surroundings, especially Lillian in "Oriental Limited," whose perceptiveness and gentleness serve her well in making her inevitable breakaway. This novella is an adventure story of sorts, set in a time filled with inventions and heady with shifting social patterns; as Lillian's beau Charles says, "first-rate days to be alive."

At the height of them, Lillian's two brothers disappear during a hiking tour of Glacier National Park. After a futile search for them, Lillian must re-surface into her life, as any one of the characters in these stories must re-surface into theirs. They all will have divided from their past, but not escaped it. It will be there, in the dividing nucleus of each cell, forming them anew.

Joyce H. Brusin

Walter McDonald, *After the Noise of Saigon*; The University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, Massachusetts, 1988; paper.

Now it begins. The soft insinuation
of ferns through spark light.

(The Middle Years)

Like the ferns in "The Middle Years," Walter McDonald begins the "soft insinuation" of memory through the images of daily life — the ironic "go[ing] inside as if nothing's happened" — in his newest collection, *After the Noise of Saigon*, recipient of the prestigious Juniper Prize. His message is clear and rings true — something *has* happened and we cannot escape our cultural memories of wars. The softness is subtle, the 'as if' potentially insidious. As McDonald shows us, the conflicts of childhood, of family, of world wars and Vietnam color our vision in our daily struggles to survive. The metaphorical connections of real and imagined experience, the two kinds of memory which McDonald presents, are inescapable, pressing themselves into our actions and conscious thoughts however much we might wish to bury them.

McDonald does not suppress the connections but brings them forth with the paradoxically peaceful musicality of his poetry. He affirms the connections and presents them one by one for us all to see. Like the light and the ferns, McDonald's poems build on each other, a mosaic, becoming more vivid as each spot of light joins another, enlarging the scope of vision, making the experience more complete and more complex. The fronds open.

And yes, we are startled at the vividness of McDonald's comprehension and our own sudden illumination. Yet, his complexity of presentation also includes gentle tolerance and wisdom — like that of children and octogenarians — rare events when we remain humane enough to allow others their momentary innocence. In "The Middle Years," he describes a lover, camping in the mountains.

Nothing else for minutes, only your
steady breathing, asleep, believing
nothing's out there that shouldn't be.

He will not disturb this needed rest. Not Now.

And in "The Rodeo Fool," the clown, bleeding beneath his baggy pants, smiles and waves to the crowd to let them believe in toughness and immortality.

Because of me, they ride home humming,
not troubled by tons of metal hurtling
past their bumpers, believing death's a black bull
mad and charging, all men are brave and cunning,
that all fall down, get gored and trampled on,
all men are able to rise with the help
of clowns, able to look death in the eye,
to wear a clown's face, laughing, and walk again.

McDonald captures the need for outward innocence or calm and the irony of owned personal, natural and cultural conflicts when he says:

These blue trees have nothing
 and all to do with what I'm here for
 after the noise of Saigon,
 the simple bitter sap that rises in me
 like bad blood I need to spill
 out here alone in silence

of deep woods, far from people I know
 who see me as a friend, not some damned
 madman stumbling for his life.

(After the Noise of Saigon)

Walter McDonald's *After the Noise of Saigon* deserves our attentive reading and our inevitable rereading. This collection is a complex mosaic and collage of inseparable events remembered in the unsettling quiet after yet another major event; McDonald's perspective is at once global, local and personal. You will recognize your own histories in this book and you will apprehend the private wars of others.

Bronwyn G. Pughe

Merrill Gilfillan, *Magpie Rising: Sketches from the Great Plains*; Pruett Publishing Company, Boulder, Colorado, 1988; \$16.95 cloth.

Read about foreign places with magical sounding names: Saskatoon, Biloxi, Aarhus, Clermont-Ferrand, the Bronx, then travel there to discover the association between your imaginings and the concrete reality of the places. In the reassociation of name with place, in that moment when we reorder the symbol and the symbolized, we rediscover the world and self. As our mind reconciles the imagined and the real, the child within us awakens. We renew with wide-eyed affirmation, our growth, our connection to symbols, self and place. And if in that moment of discovery we could capture our feelings with sharp images, our thoughts with fresh words, we would produce a book as enchanting, fresh, and fun as *Magpie Rising*, Merrill Gilfillan's collection of essays.

Gilfillan's three books of poetry prepared him well for this undertaking. He effectively uses poetic technique in his essays to bring us closer to his subject, the expanse of the Great Plains. Quick turns of language connect the vastness of the subject to the specific image so that we feel the author's sense of wonder, amusement and idea. We feel "the horizontal charge of transversable space," the "seductive space of suction and vortex, of migration and wandering and swirl."

For Gilfillan, "Driving [the Plains] becomes a sort of gesture, an intimate interaction with the earth's surface having to do with words like *tangent*

and *cosine*." Highways "take you through villages with chunks of the late 1940's suspended intact, stowed for safekeeping: ghost hotels, ranks of green and white elfin tourist cottages gone to seed, and tiny ex-chili parlors and pool halls abandoned on weed-choked corners."

His mention of specialty foods from cafes and his own meals prepared over campfires or on a hot plate in an out of the way motel punctuate Gilfillan's prose. Similarly, he selects from the offerings of the Great Plains as a finicky diner might pluck delicacies from a smorgasbord. The quintessential hamlet of the Great Plains: (not listed in the *Readers' Digest Atlas*) Speed, Kansas, "has found its pocket, a web of space and cartilage that antedates the cooked and bobs steadily in the raw." Other places are better avoided—Liberal, Kansas where "street directions are consistently given in relation to fast food joints." Between meals and before the day's last taste of George Dickle, Gilfillan offers us meaty writing.

Various locations trigger ideas and connections much like the failing towns of Montana inspired Richard Hugo. From the Sweetgrass Hills of Montana to the Sandhills of Nebraska, Gilfillan involves us in geologic history, the behavior of the birds, and the history of the people. In one section he recounts G.B. Grinnell's story of the brave Cheyenne warrior, Mouse's Road, who single-handedly held off a war party of Comanche and Kiowa Indians. "The theater of the plains' space cries out for human gesture of fitting magnitude, ample of dimension yet humble under a full sky," he says. "The plains tribes knew it, did it right, by necessity but by prescription as well — stringing the line of human love and war and grief out long and tungsten thin." Gilfillan's writing is itself a gesture of fitting magnitude and ample of dimension, drawn from the expanse of the Great Plains.

For us, *Magpie Rising* sheds new light on this vast area in a prose styled to suit the need. Reading this book reconstructs place. In the author's own words, "Thus a geography not one's own forms in the mind, firms on a lattice of pregnant place names. It is a private mythic geography that interlocks with one's past through the most intimate means, the language." Merrill Gilfillan's quickening prose, his dexterous manipulation of language moves us expertly through the vastness of this space.

Mac Swan

David Brendan Hopes, *A Sense of the Morning*; Dodd, Mead & Co., 1988; \$16.95 cloth.

The imperative of the world is for us to see and to bear witness. David Hopes, a poet and teacher at the University of North Carolina, adds to the trinity begun with his name the extraordinary faith that he will succeed in leading us to see again, and love's desire that infuses whatever he points

out to us. In his collected essays, *A Sense of the Morning*, David Hopes joins a long tradition of visionaries who struggle to redeem innocence from confusion and loss.

Redemption, you say. *Big talk*. Yes, I answer, but easy to do. Easy to begin. Point. Cry out.

"Past Lives"

Hopes sets out on his literary quest with three guides: a language heavily burdened with theology and human history, the natural world which other writers have dissected and romanticized, and a belief in an enduring spirit with the cynical, postmodern reader. As fairytales have it, the tools appear inauspicious, but in combination with the hero or heroine's name and all it portends, consummation is possible.

The essays are meditations on events in the author's life, by way of his awareness of the natural world, using language that flaunts a Christian metaphysics. It is his relentless passion for what lies beyond understanding that renews the language and our capacity to see, and grants us our heritage transformed and illuminated: lit from within.

What follows is a history of eyes, how they start at nothing and learn the world, not from any virtue of their own but because the world wills to be seen and therefore dazzles forth eon upon eon to catch the glance.

(from the preface)

What threatens to consume us is what desires us, and what we would abhor from fear is what we must know as beautiful—this is the insight that Hopes reiterates as he points over and over again, saying, "See!" When he throws out old letters in order to move and then watches, ecstatically, as raccoons eat them in the dark, he is telling us to look to the mundane, and that the old categories can be reclaimed.

The Visitation at the wood's edge is always fatal. It cannot be predicted or declined. You open your arms. You pretend it is what you sought. Who expected a prince, a carpenter's son, a camel herder? Dispensation is the essential surprise. Grace Descended passes by one bent on his preconceptions. A new world debuts not from the prophecies but in the mating of red birds on a branch, a doe striking her forefoot on the ground, twisted shadow of herons passing over the moon, a pattern hitherto unsuspected, a beauty so

unprepared-for it must either be rejected or convulse
the soul.

"First Sight"

David Hopes gathers contemporary theories to his purpose when he says:

Culpepper knew the difference between vulgar supposition and provable truth. His own suppositions are not vulgar, but airy, beautiful, coherent, incorrect. Why? I suggest that his quaint world was Reality then because that was the world that was meant to be. Not ordained by God or fate, but by the play of Nicholas Culpepper's imagination over the ditches of Spitalfields. It is not a matter of perception, but of aesthetics. Former men missed Natural Selection and the Big Bang not because of ignorance but because of the beauty of the alternatives. How *beautiful* that the mark of Venus should be graven on the goldenrod. How beautiful that the stars hang in crystal spheres ply over ply above Foundation Earth. When do perceptions change and enlarge? When the mind changes and enlarges the set of things that it can call beautiful.

"First Sight"

It is through the desire of the world for us, and our corresponding answer of desire, that language, history, and the mundane reveal what they harbor for us — the possibility of our participation in the wisdom of our ancestors that lies hidden. David Brendan Hopes' vision is welcome, and necessary.

Bette Tomlinson

C. K. Williams, *Flesh & Blood*; Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1987.

It was Chekhov who wrote that the responsibility of the artist was not to resolve problems but rather to formulate those problems correctly. A profoundly difficult and subtle task, no doubt, but if we keep Chekhov's advice in mind, we can better appreciate the quality of C. K. Williams's latest collection of poems, *Flesh and Blood*.

Each poem, deceptively casual in tone, tells a piece of a story. And each story obsessively drives toward revelation, toward a moment of uncompromising and at times heartbreaking clarity. One example (and there are many) can be found in the poem "Alzheimer's: The Husband":

He'd been a clod, he knew, yes, always aiming toward his vision of the good life, always acting on it.
 He knew he'd been unconscionably self-centered, had indulged himself with his undreamed—of good fortune,
 but he also knew that the single-mindedness with which he'd attended to his passions, needs and whims,
 and which must have seemed to others the grossest sort of egotism, was also what was really at the base
 of how he'd almost offhandedly worked out the intuitions and moves which had brought him here,
 and this was all that different: to spend his long anticipated retirement learning to cook,
 clean house, dress her, even to apply her makeup, wasn't any sort of secular saintliness—
 that would be belittling—it was just the next necessity he saw himself as being called to.

This is a courageous, honest collection. And it is the very hardness of Williams's vision that allows him to be compassionate while avoiding the dangers of sentimentality, that allows him to redeem (in his own words) "our experiences from the temporal and trivial." His characters, and we as readers, are placed in a world much like the one we live in each day, and yet we are forced to stop, to see ourselves for a moment, and hear the questions asked in a way that — despite the fact that they cannot be answered — gives us a sense of understanding those questions and ourselves a little better. "Who will come to us now?" Williams writes in "The Park," "Who will solace us? Who will take us in their healing hands?"

Henry Gerfen

Roger Dunsmore, *Blood House*; Pulp Press, Vancouver, Canada, 1987; \$5.95 paper.

For over twenty years, poet and teacher Roger Dunsmore has brought to Montana letters a unique and subversive vision. He has articulated that vision in his courses in humanities, Native American literature, and wilderness studies at the University of Montana and through his books and essays, prominent among them *On the Road to Sleeping Child Hot Springs* (1972; a thoroughly revised second edition appeared in 1977), "Nickolaus Black Elk—Holy Man in History" (*Kuksu: Journal of Backcountry Writing*, 1977), *Laszlo Toth* (1979), and *The Sharp-Shinned Hawk* (1987).

Because it does not fall within the arbitrarily defined parameters — lyric, confessional, apolitical — of what is commonly thought to constitute

"Montana" poetry, Dunsmore's maverick *oeuvre* has never received the critical acclaim it deserves. Despite this lack of recognition, Dunsmore has continued to forge his singular texts, texts that celebrate "the small things, the ordinary things that are always extraordinary if only we can see." His powerful and moving poems are acts of *remembering*, and remembering, as he notes, "is a way to honor what holds back the terrible dismembering." Now, with the publication of *Blood House* (and with the appearance of his poem, "The Pink Butterfly," in *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology*), Dunsmore may finally find a wider readership and recognition of his place in the pantheon of contemporary Montana poets who matter.

The poems in *Blood House* speak in many and various voices, the voices of Spanish conquistadors, Native American elders living out their days in sterile nursing homes, prison inmates, a reservation schoolteacher, Che Guevara, family, and friends. These compelling voices — by turns quiet and boisterous, meditative and enraged, loving and estranged — tell us what it means to be human in a world endangered by humans. And by their particularity, they give us a Montana rarely evoked, a Montana where an old Indian woman stuffs her vagina with paper "so the whitemen couldn't hurt you anymore," where "we leave no pieces of flesh from our arms, / no beads or bright cloth, / only a dime on the sleeping buffalo," where "I'm still working at Bill's one-stop / and waiting for Donna's water to break," where "there's lotsa stories they wouldn't want told."

Dunsmore's courage in telling the stories "they" don't want us to hear is perhaps his greatest gift, but in many ways, the "personal" poems in the book's final section are its most moving and immediate. In these poems, people die (a farmer in a car wreck near Malta, an unborn child through abortion); another child, the poet's son, is born and brings great joy; the child's placenta — the "blood house" of the title — is planted in the garden ("Your mother calls it death, / burying the part that housed you / . . . Second birth / of every birth"); to an Indian friend, the eating of tripe signifies rebirth; and another kind of death — the poet's divorce — brings the circle around again.

In the book's final poem, written "three weeks after the separation," Dunsmore addresses his "almost-four-year-old" son: "You laugh in your sleep. / Do you have a good dream?/ Yes, you smile, not waking / and rub my back with your feet." Each death, he seems to say, need not be cause only for sorrow, and though the poems in *Blood House* are filled with loss and very real pain, Roger Dunsmore, through the radical act of "remembering," helps us to see the considerable life that still abounds in this extraordinary-ordinary world.

Rick Newby

Rick DeMarinis, *The Coming Triumph of the Free World*; Viking, 1988; \$16.95 cloth.

The present, Rick DeMarinis seems to say, is like an apartment you live in but can't afford. Your landlord turns off the water and sends his deranged cousin over to crawl through your basement, cutting pipes randomly as he goes. But if, when you turn on the tap, you tilt the glass at just the right angle, then out comes a gush of Cliquot Club Cola.

Maybe.

In "The Handgun," the opening story of DeMarinis' wonderful collection of short stories, *The Coming Triumph of the Free World*, a nameless first person narrator finds himself besieged on all fronts. His unemployed days are followed by sleepless, sexless nights, doomed in both regards by an insanely barking dog that only he and his wife Raquel can hear. The solution? The times, and Raquel, dictate a handgun. With the purchase, though, the dog stops barking. And the gun accidentally goes off.

It shot a Currier and Ives print off the wall. It was an original, given to me by my grandfather. *Fast Trotters in Harlem Lane, N.Y.* Men in silk hats driving fine teams of horses down the dirt roads of nineteenth century Holland.

("The Handgun")

The ordered, safe, somehow reassuring past has a fatal bullet in it. The narrator muses that the gun has sought Raquel and him out, changing them in the process. He looks at his face reflected in a mirror. "It had more mileage on it than my life justified." Life happens, but not much happens in life. Age is without wisdom or event. The times are rife with paranoia, regret, insanity, rage.

And yet — reading DeMarinis fills me with joy and hope. His stories are comic and magical, the language always three steps to the left of where expectations lead. Despite the sad pull of the events in these stories, sometimes the everyday can suddenly become the apotheosis.

In "Your Burden is Lifted, Love Returns," the nameless narrator of "The Handgun" is trying to gather his life together after he's struck Raquel with his fist, causing her to leave him. He's devastated, hating his action, wanting her return.

I took refuge in chores. I cleaned the house to showplace perfection. I resumed half-finished projects — the windows needed caulking, the patio slab needed paint. While rolling a new layer of insulation across the attic, I found a newspaper dated March 15, 1949. The quaint headlines amused me

for a while. The world of thirty-eight years ago seemed only knee-deep in quicksand. It was up to its armpits now, praying for a rope. My horoscope was short and sweet: "Your burden is lifted, love returns." I took it to heart. In the mantic arts, thirty-eight year discrepancies are trifles only the literal minded take seriously.

It was a pleasant day, sunny with promise. I took a six-pack of beer out to the front porch and waited for her.

("Your Burden is Lifted, Love Returns")

I guess there's no reason for hope, but that doesn't mean hope's impossible. The modern Cupid may be crazed giant wearing nothing but jockey shorts and heart shaped tattoos, as DeMarinis presents him in "Disneyland," and the matches made by this cupid may be as out of synch as he is, but at least love of some kind is still possible.

And the contemporary world's consensus may be that Louis Quenon, the shaman in "Medicine Man," is a charlatan, "a breed, oily customer, quack, boomer, conman, crook." And Louis, in response, may have stopped performing cures —

"No more cures," Louis said. "The world has gone stale. Not the world of trees and rocks and animals, but the world that men have made. We hate it so bad we are itching to blow it up. . . . It's useless to get rid of cancer in a man who can't tell the difference between the urge to grin and the urge to spit."

(Medicine Man)

But still, for those who, like the old-timer who narrates the story, can maintain belief, there are rewards —

I was thinking, Isn't it nice that things never really end and what appears to be finished often fools you and more often than not comes back to start all over again with only minor changes for the sake of variety.

(Medicine Man)

The Coming Triumph of the Free World is a terrific collection of stories. Literary reviews are probably silly exercises, especially reviews in small magazines, read by few and forgotten quickly by most of those. But literature itself is important, especially literature as original, as strangely life-giving as these stories. It is my small hope that this collection gets

the readership it deserves, and that Rick DeMarinis will reward that readership with more works like this.

Tom Stone

William Kittredge and Annick Smith, eds.; *The Last Best Place: A Montana Anthology*; Montana Historical Society Press, Helena, 1988; \$39.95 cloth.

This spacious and beautiful book (designed handsomely by Kathleen Bogan) is divided into eight chapters covering Native American stories, journals of exploration, early pioneers and Indians, Butte, the agricultural frontier, modern Montana literature, and contemporary fiction and poetry. Each chapter is introduced by seven editors in thoughtful, elegant essays which are themselves destined to enter the canon of Montana literature.

James Welch, Native American novelist and poet, ends the first essay with a one-word sentence: "Listen." He is introducing the chapter on Native American stories which, he says, "eased the way through life by instructing, entertaining, shaping one's view of the world and its creation, by *placing* one within the great scheme of things," but he might be speaking of the entire anthology, because the stories and reminiscences, the essays and reports, the poems, are all speaking to the reader from some corner of the geographical and historical and spiritual *place* (*that is Montana, and as Welch says, "the strength lies in the telling and listening."*)

Places, though, is more accurate, for each writer claims a unique sphere, each in his or her own way seeking or naming, in William Kittredge's words, "a good place in which to conduct a good life." For Arapooish, Chief of the Crows, it is the Crow Country which "the Great Spirit has put in exactly the right place." For Lewis and Clark it is an exotic and wild *terra incognita*. For Norman Maclean it is among the big rocks and big trees of the Big Blackfoot where beauty is palpable and love is elusive and where "all things merge into one, and a river runs through it."

The book, then, is a community of voices attempting to ease the way through life. We are here under A. B. Guthrie's *Big Sky*, or Ivan Doig's house of sky, or D'Arcy McNickle's enemy sky. Here is the Assiniboine country that is "almost always covered with snow," the Cheyenne's sacred Bear Butte, and Nanny Alderson's "rough new country" of the eastern plains. Here is Richard Hugo's Milltown Union Bar where, he says, you could love:

That was love, love of home, love of the possibility
that even if my life would never again change for the
better, at least there, in that unpretentious watering
hole that trembled when the Vista Dome North Coast

Limited roared by, I could live inside myself warm
in fantasies, or chat with honest people who were
neither afraid nor ashamed of their responses to life.
It wasn't the worst way to be.

The Last Best Place is a place like the Milltown Union Bar, a place full
of the love of home, where you can live inside yourself warm in fantasies,
where honest people chat. Listen.

Steven Goldsmith

CutBank Contributors

CHRIS AUTIO is a Portland artist whose work has been exhibited on the West Coast as well as in Montana. DIANE AVERILL teaches at Lewis and Clark College and Portland Community College. She has poems forthcoming in *Kalliope*, *Midwest Quarterly*, and *Mississippi Mud*. JOYCE BRUSIN is a former editor of *CutBank* who makes her home in Missoula where she writes and works for the University of Montana. JERRY BUMPUS, author of a novel and three books of stories, has published his stories in journals and anthologies too numerous to list. His second novel *The Happy Convent* is due out from December Press later this year. He and his wife live in Escondido, California, and he teaches in San Diego State's new MFA program. ROBERT CREELEY's latest collection of poems is *The Company*. He is currently a visiting scholar in Helsinki, Finland. *Punching Out*, a book of poems by JIM DANIELS, is slated for publication by Wayne State University Press later this year. Widely regarded as the finest Brazilian poet writing in Portuguese today, CARLOS DRUMMOND DE ANDRADE was born in a mining town in the state of Minas Gerais in 1902. Since 1934 he has lived in Rio de Janeiro, where he worked for the Ministry of Education until his retirement a few years ago. A former professor of Humanities at the U. of M., Roger Dunsmore is the author of several books of poetry. He is currently setting up a humanities program for a Native American school in Tuba City, AZ. JAMES FINNEGAN lives in Northampton, Massachusetts, where he runs a reading series at the local arts center. His poems have appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Missouri Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and other journals. HENRY GERFEN is a graduate student in creative writing and linguistics at the U. of M. He is currently working on a method of generating texts by subjecting elements of chaos to fusion reactions. Born in Saigon, South Vietnam, ELIZABETH GORDON grew up in West Virginia and Tennessee. She received a Master's degree from Brown University and lives in Providence, Rhode Island. A member of the influential "Generation of '27," JORGE GUILLÉN was born in Valladolid, Spain, in 1893. He taught at the Sorbonne, at Oxford University, at universities in Murcia and Seville, and, for twenty years, at Wellesley College. PATRICIA HENLEY's first book of short fiction, *Friday Night at Silver Star*, won the Montana First Book Award in 1985. She divides her time between Montana and Indiana, where she is an associate professor at Purdue University. After years in the Northwest and in New England, CHRISTOPHER HOWELL now lives in Emporia, Kansas, where he teaches and acts as poetry editor for Lynx House Press. *Sea Change* is his fourth and most recent book of poems. WAYNE D. JOHNSON's manuscript was selected for a *Transatlantic Review* Henfield Foundation Award in June of 1987. Other stories from the collection are forthcoming in *The Atlantic*, *Ploughshares*, *Cimarron Review*, and *Amelia*. JIM LANGLAS, English Department Chair at Wheaton North High School in Wheaton, Illinois, has poems forthcoming in *Cottonwood*, *Spoon River Quarterly*, and *Sou'wester*. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, JOHN MELVIN lives in Iowa City, where he is employed as a clerk at University Hospitals. This is his first publication. RICK NEWBY, author of two collections of poems and a guide to Montana's State Parks, is a contributing editor of *North Country Review* and the editor of "Montana Writer's Page," *Front*

Row Center. For five years SHERYL NOETHE was a resident poet in the NYC public schools; currently she is doing a three-month residency in the schools of Salmon, Idaho. *Descent of Heaven over the Lake* is her first book of poems, and her publications include poems in *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Ohio Review*, and *The Berkeley Review*. MARNIE PRANGE, a graduate of the MFA program at the University of Alabama, is a former editor of the *Black Warrior Review*. She has poems forthcoming in *Woman Poet: The South*. BRONWYN PUGHE is a former editor of *CutBank*. She is finishing up her MFA and MA at the U. of M. and will soon be off in search of a real job in the real world, preferably not in Kansas or Texas. PATTIANN ROGERS was the 1988 Hugo Writer-in-Residence at UM. Her latest collection of poems is *Legendary Performance*. STAN ROSE teaches Spanish at UM. In addition to translating poetry from the Portuguese, he has translated historical documents and served as an interpreter of Spanish and Portuguese. NATANIA ROSENFELD, a graduate student in the English at Princeton University, has published poems in *Seneca Review*, *Graham House Review*, and *Laurel Review*. MARK ROZEMA is getting an MFA from the U. of M. He has published in *Puerto Del Sol*, *The Louisville Review*, and other magazines of high taste. BILL SHIELDS is a Vietnam vet whose poems have appeared in *Contact II*, *Hanging Loose*, and *San Fernando Poetry Journal*. He lives outside Pittsburgh, shuffling for his wage as a printer. *A Guide to Forgetting*, JEFFREY SKINNER's second book of poems, was chosen last year by Tess Gallagher in the National Poetry Series Open Competition. He has poems forthcoming in *The Atlantic* and *Poetry*. WILLIAM STAFFORD lives in Oregon. His most recent collection of poems is *An Oregon Message*. MAC SWAN lives in Polson, MT where he teaches high school. He frequently writes book reviews for area newspapers, and has just completed a book for high school students on Montana literature. BETTE TOMLINSON is a former assistant editor of *CutBank*. She currently teaches school in Missoula. *Bad Girl, With Hawk*, recently published by the University of Illinois Press, is NANCE VAN WINCKEL's first book of poems. She has new poems in several journals, including *APR*, *Poetry*, and *The Georgia Review*. JENNIE VER STEEG, a graduate student in Child Development at Iowa State University, has work forthcoming in *Crab Creek Review*. MORRIE WARSHAWSKI's work has appeared in *Apalachee Quarterly*, *Yellow Silk*, *Exquisite Corpse*, and *Modern Poetry Studies*. DARA WIER's most recent book is *The Book of Knowledge*; she lives and works in Amherst, Massachusetts. Co-editor of *Emergency Magazine*, JOHN WHALEN is a poet and printer. THEODORE WOROZBYT, general manager of University Book Services at Emory University in Atlanta, has poems in *Poetry*, *Carolina Quarterly*, and *Southern Poetry Review*.

Books Received

- Jim Barnes, *La Plata Cantata*, Purdue University Press, 1989. \$6.75 paper.
- Steve Bauer, *Daylight Savings*, Peregrine Smith Books, Salt Lake, 1989. \$9.95 paper.
- Carol Gordon, *Lost Stone*, Flume Press, Chico, CA, 1988.
- Leslie Woolf Hedley, *Watchman, What of the Night?*, Embassy Hall Editions, Berkeley, CA, 1988. \$7.95 paper.
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- Robert Long, *What Happens*, The Galileo Press, Baltimore, MD, 1988. \$9.95 paper.
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- Walter McDonald, *Night Landings*, Harper & Row, NY, NY, 1989. \$10.95 paper.
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- Michael Smetzer, *A Quiet Man*, Baggeboda Press, little Rock, AK, 1988. \$2.50 paper.
- Fred Viebahn, *The Stain*, Story Line Press, Santa Cruz, CA, 1988. \$10.00 paper, \$18.00 cloth.

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ALASKA QUARTERLY REVIEW, University of Alaska, Anchorage, AK 99508.

THE AMERICAN VOICE, Suite 1215 Heybourne Building, Louisville, KY 40202.

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL, RFD 2, BX 154, Ellsworth, ME 04605.

THE BLOOMSBURY REVIEW, 1028 Bannock St., Denver, CO 80204.

THE CAROLINA QUARTERLY, Green law Hall 006A, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27514.

THE CHARITON REVIEW, Northeast Missouri State University, Kirksville, MO 63501.

CINCINNATI POETRY REVIEW, Dept. of English, ML069, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH 45221.

THE COLORADO-NORTH REVIEW, University Center, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639.

COTTONWOOD, Box J, Kansas Union, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045.

GARGOYLE, POB 30906, Bethesda, MD 20814.

GRAHAM HOUSE REVIEW, Box 5000, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY 13346.

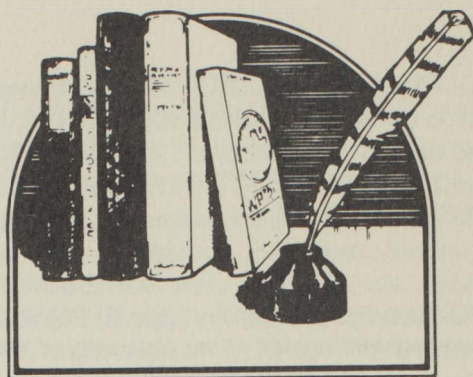
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THE GREENFIELD REVIEW, R.D. 1, Box 80, Greenfield Center, NY 12833.

INDIANA REVIEW, 316 N.

Jordan, Bloomington, IN 47405. *ION*, 2117 Evans #4, Cheyenne, WY 82001. *THE IOWA REVIEW*, 308 EPB, the University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242. *KANSAS QUARTERLY*, Denison Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506. *MEMPHIS STATE REVIEW*, Dept. of English, Memphis State University, Memphis, TN 38152. *MISSISSIPPI REVIEW*, University of Southern Mississippi, Southern Station, Box 5144, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-5144. *MR. COGITO*, c/o John Gogol, POB 66124, Portland, OR 97266. *NEW PAGES*, POB 438, Grand Blanc, MI 48439. *NEXUS*, 006 University Center, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435. *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, IA 50614. *THE PANHANDLER*, English Dept., University of West Florida, Pensacola, FL 32514. *PARADISE CREEK JOURNAL*, English Dept., University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83843. *PASSAGES NORTH*, William Bonifas Fine Arts Center, Escanaba, MI 49829. *PHOEBE*, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. *POET LORE*, The Writer's Center, 7815 Old Georgetown Rd., Bethesda, MD 20814. *POETRY EAST*, Dept. of English, 802 West Belden Ave., DePaul University, Chicago, IL 60614. *POETS & WRITERS*, 72 Spring St., New York, NY 10012. *RADDLE MOON*, 9060 Ardmere Drive, Sidney B.C., V8L 3S1 Canada. *ROCKY MOUNTAIN REVIEW*, Boise State University, Boise, ID 83725. *SAMISDAT*, Box 129, Richford, VT 05476. *THE SEATTLE REVIEW*, Padelford Hall, GN-30, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195. *SMALL PRESS REVIEW*, Dustbooks, POB 100, Paradise, CA 95969. *SOUNDINGS*, 101 Gowen Hall, DO-30, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195. *SOU'WESTER*, Dept. of English, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Edwardsville, IL 62026-1438. *TAR RIVER POETRY*, Dept. of English, General Classroom Building, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27858-4353. *WESTERN HUMANITIES REVIEW*, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT 84112. *WILLOW SPRINGS*, Eastern Washington University, Box 1063, Cheney, WA 99004. *WISCONSIN REVIEW*, Box 158, Radford Hall, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, WI 54901. *WRITER'S N.W.*, Media Weavers, RT 3, Box 376, Hillsboro, OR 97124. *ZONE 3*, Box 4565, Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, TN 37044.

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Lyric with Blue Horses

For David Luckert

Walking, eyes tilted up at galaxies and leaves
whirling in darkened November, one remembers
these horses, blue ones

turning among graces of fallen corn
and planets. These are the horses resting with all love's china
against the shades of effigy that cast each day as a problem in
blood
and footsteps and gardens of purchased gratitude.

These are the horses

so delicate in the linings of touch
that without them why live? Why undream the fist
unless these horses blue as Heaven graze and imagine grazing
exactly as the painter imagines line and color
running down his arms and out

through fingers into the brush,
listening.

And into this listening a hill rises and a field of days galloping
because they do
and because the sources of joy graze among the gods of them
and the gods fill with beauty and burn blue as the moon.
And all moons drink this chilled hour
filling with hills and fields and blue immaculate beasts
that one remembers, suddenly, as if they were always there.

Christopher Howell